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# THE MARPLOT

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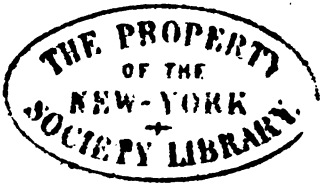


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# CONTENTS.

## PART I.


| | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| I. | A SHIP COMES HOME | 3 |
| II. | UNCLES AMONG THE RUINS | 15 |
| III. | VOWERAKER DROPS A SPARK | 22 |
| IV. | FIRST LOVE | 36 |
| V. | MODELLING IN THE ROUND | 47 |
| VI. | ADVENTURES OF A TRAMP | 55 |
| VII. | THE OBTRUSION OF A DONKEY UPON A FASHIONABLE PARTY | 71 |
| VIII. | MISS CHILLINGTON | 80 |
| IX. | CONNIE | 93 |
| X. | A SUPPER PARTY | 109 |
| XI. | CHELSEA TO WESTMINSTER | 126 |
| XII. | HOLY MATRIMONY | 132 |


## PART II.


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I. | THE WEARING OF THE GREEN | 147 |
| II. | A MOONLIGHT DANCE | 165 |
| III. | THE ACCIDENT | 179 |
| IV. | CONTRABAND OF LOVE | 188 |

PAGE

V. HUMPHRY BEGINS A COMEDY . . . . . 202
VI. TERPSICHORE IN AN ATTIC . . . . . 211
VII. MRS. WRIXON MALORY . . . . . 217
VIII. ELSINORA AND CONNIE . . . . . 232
IX. THE ISLAND . . . . . 242
X. HEROICS ON THE COMIC STAGE . . . . 250
XI. THE DUEL . . . . . 260

## PART III.

I. A NEW ASPECT OF A DESPISED WORLD . . 269
II. THE BALL . . . . . 283
III. THE DESERT . . . . . 296
IV. CONNIE DISCOVERS A CONSCIENCE . . . 318
V. LOVE AND LIFE . . . . . 333
VI. THE MARPLOT . . . . . 337
VII. A PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE AND A LECTURE ON LOVE . . . . . 358
VIII. OBSERVATIONS AT THE CROSS-ROADS . . . 372
IX. THE PINE WOODS . . . . . 379
X. ELSINORA AND O'CONNOR . . . . . 384
XI. THE PROGRESS OF HUMPHRY'S COMEDY . . 390
XII. THE BEGINNING OF A WEDDING JOURNEY . 398
XIII. TRAGEDY OR ANTICLIMAX . . . . . 404
XIV. THE END OF A COMEDY . . . . . 412
XV. FAREWELL . . . . . 419

# THE MARPLOT.

## PART I.

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# CHAPTER I.

## A SHIP COMES HOME.

PROFESSOR WINTERSEA returned from his early walk across Hyde Park one morning in a very happy frame of mind. A problem relating to perfectly elastic solids, which had been perplexing him for ten days, had suddenly grown clear to him, and he was looking forward to the pleasure of transferring his solution to paper after breakfast. So occupied had he been with his problem during the last two days that he had forgotten his letters; but at breakfast this morning he allowed himself the relaxation of reading them, — fixing them open in a vacant division of the toast rack so that he might enjoy them without exacting from his hands that attention which they owed to the meal. The perusal of one of these letters changed the expression of contentment on his face to one of anguish. It came from a distant connection, a Mr. Wrixon, who lived alone with a brother in a half-ruined house on the borders of Somerset and Devon; it reminded him painfully of a fact which he had endeavoured to forget: that he was one of the guardians of two children; it informed him that a ship called the *Candia* bearing

these children and their mother from India was expected to arrive in London either on that day or the next, and asked him to meet them and superintend their departure for the west. Mr. Wrixon remarked that it would be a good opportunity for the Professor to make the acquaintance of his wards.

These were a boy and a girl, children of a Captain Malory, a cousin who had been a friend of his boyhood. Professor Wintersea being the only relation Captain Malory possessed with whom he had not quarrelled, had been appointed as one of the children's guardians; and though the office bristled with terrors for the shy student, he had been too good natured to refuse to act. He had endeavoured to forget. But now the hour of his trial had come. He was deeply moved; the news was full of unpleasant suggestions: those of business responsibility, of a multitude of dreaded and difficult duties.

"Dear me! Bless my soul!" he exclaimed, "this is very distressing — very inopportune."

The immediate task before him was also uncongenial. He feared children, especially growing boys, almost as much as he feared young ladies who were already full grown. He remembered that he would have to give up his morning's work; but the Professor was an unselfish gentleman, and the thought that he might be guilty of the discourtesy of keeping a lady waiting on the steamer, while he was indulging in perfectly elastic solids, was even more distressing to him than the abandonment of his studies.

As he drove down to the docks the quiet streets reminded him that it was Sunday. It was twelve o'clock before he found the *Candia*, lying among the grim warehouses near the Tower, and he observed her deserted appearance with some anxiety as he went on board. At first he saw no one on deck, but presently discovered a sailor leaning over the bulwarks, smoking. The Professor approached, and in his most courteous manner — his politeness was of a more formal type than is common now — asked him if the captain was on board.

"No, he ain't. What's your business?" replied the man — not a pleasant man at any time, and now not completely sober.

"I came to see — that is, to meet some friends," explained Mr. Wintersea, "but I fear I am rather late."

The sailor remained leaning on the bulwarks with an eye over his shoulder. "Yes, you ain't too soon; all the passengers went ashore yesterday."

"Yesterday, by jove! ah! dear me, dear me! But perhaps you can tell me if any message was left for me by my friends?"

The sailor chuckled. "Well, if that ain't like a landsman. Without knowing who you may be or who your friends may be, you talks about a message. Now what colours do your friends fly?"

"I beg your pardon?" asked the Professor, not comprehending.

The man turned with a look of vast amusement

and scrutinised the Professor, who was beginning to be nettled.

"In your case," he said with dignity, "a little more of the *suaviter in modo* would not be out of place, sir."

The Latin was resented as a personal affront. "Look here," growled the sailor, "we wants none of yer damnation parly vooing on this here British ship. You ax a straight question and I'll give you a straight answer. Isn't it bad enough, after being at sea eleven weeks, to be left here while all my mates is ashore enjoying of themselves without being boarded by foreigners? Ay," he added, self-pity taking the place of anger, "eleven weeks at sea with eleven weeks' pay in hand and no chance of going ashore to spend it. I ain't a married man myself, and I ain't sorry; but that don't say as I ain't fond of ladies' society, and I've had my fair share of fun with 'em. Why, Lor' bless you, governor, when I belong to the *Evening Star*, and we was lying off Bonus Airs there was a Spanish girl —"

"Exactly, exactly," interrupted the Professor rapidly, "very beautiful race the Spaniards, — singularly so. Pray can you tell me whether any letter was left for Mr. Wintersea by Mrs. Malory or the Captain?"

The sailor's manner changed at once. "Mrs. Malory, did you say? Will you be a near relation of hers?"

"A distant relation: pray, why do you ask?"

"Ah — she's dead."

"Dead! Good God, man, are you serious? When? What? — " The Professor could not proceed.

"Ay, governor, it's a shock to you I can see, so 'twas to all aboard, but it's a fact. She died on the voyage, and we buried her at sea, sure enough."

The Professor saw that the man was speaking the truth; he was deeply shocked; he had a peculiar horror of death. The sailor continued to relate some of the details of the circumstances, which he hardly heard; his thoughts were far away; but suddenly he exclaimed —

"And the children, are they dead too?"

He did not know it himself, but when he asked that question there was a momentary vague hope in his heart that it might be so: it would have been the solution of a difficulty, an escape from dreaded guardianship; but if he had been conscious of the feeling he would have blushed with shame.

"Oh no, they're right enough; Captain Bunting's took 'em ashore with him; nice children they be. Why, young Dick, he was almost one of us. After we buried his mother he'd scarce speak to one of the passengers, but he come up to the fo'castle. And to see the way he looked after the kid was a sight; he always had her in tow, and her nurse, — a stiff-backed lady, no liberties, governor, with her, no fear, — he never let her do nothing for Nan. I believe he scrubbed her decks and spread her canvas his self. I beg pardon, sir, for being short like when you

come aboard; I ain't had much time for holystoning my language, and you see you was a stranger to me, and my mates was all ashore enjoying of themselves. Well, now, I remember, the Cap'n's left a letter for you in the cabin."

The letter was addressed to "Mrs. Malory's friends," and in it the Captain, after briefly mentioning her death, said that he had taken the children to the Bedford Hotel in Covent Garden, where he generally stayed himself when in London. Having read this, the Professor bestowed a fee upon his acquaintance, and departed hastily, in a state of mind more perturbed than ever.

He was not fortunate in the circumstances of his meeting with his wards. When the door of a private room in the hotel was opened and his name announced he encountered a scene so unlike anything he had anticipated that he stood speechless with bewilderment. A tall gentleman with a noble brow and a countenance which, even in wrath, wore a long-suffering smile, was standing in the middle of the room; opposite to him was a boy of thirteen, whose face was flushed with rage, and who was in the act of tearing up a letter, the fragments of which he threw at the benevolent gentleman's feet. On a sofa sat Captain Bunting, smiling with satisfaction, and on the Captain's knee was a pretty little girl of five. The Professor distinctly heard the awful words, "It's lies from beginning to end, and you're a liar and a sneak," spoken by the boy to whom he was guardian.

He was thoroughly frightened, and half unconsciously exclaimed, "God bless my soul! Dear me! This is — this is very unusual."

There was an awkward silence; the boy looked at the Captain; the gentleman advanced towards the Professor.

"If I am not mistaken, sir, you are this boy's guardian?" he said.

"I fear so — that is, I hope so. I —" stumbled the Professor.

"This letter, which you see in fragments, was addressed to you, sir, by me. Poor Mrs. Malory was a friend of my wife. I was in a measure entrusted with the care of the children during the voyage. I felt it my duty to write to you with reference to the boy's character."

"Don't listen to what he says, sir."

"Dick," said Captain Bunting, "hold your noise."

"Don't listen to him," cried Dick, still boiling with indignation. "The letter was all lies; he had the cheek to read it to me, and tell me to give it you. He said I didn't care when my mother — he said I insulted him and went off in bad company with the sailors, as if they weren't better than him."

"It is all perfectly true," said the gentleman calmly. "The boy is almost without heart; his mother's death had no subduing influence on him — it hardened him. I should like to be allowed a few minutes' private conversation with you when you are at leisure. Now I will ask you to excuse me. You have had an

opportunity of judging for yourself what he is like."

An uncomfortable pause followed his departure. Now that his passion had passed, the boy felt humiliated and ashamed; it was very hard that his guardian should have met him under such circumstances; he was silent, and looked to the Captain for help.

Captain Bunting rose with a reassuring laugh. "You must not take too much notice of what you have just heard, sir," said he. "Dick and that one didn't hit it off together. There might be a bit of truth in what he said about his going too much to the fo'castle and standing drinks, but there's nothing to trouble you — Dick's right enough."

"Of course, of course," assented the Professor, much relieved; "I am delighted to have made your acquaintance, Captain Bunting."

Dick and the Professor then approached each other with mutual shyness.

"How d'you do, how are you?" said Mr. Wintersea. "I'm — I'm your guardian you know, — that is, your cousin." He always spoke rapidly; when he was nervous he spoke more rapidly than usual.

"We hoped you'd come tremendously," said Dick; "it was very good of you to come to-day."

"Oh, not at all, not at all, my dear sir, my dear boy. I ought to have met you yesterday, but the ship arrived so suddenly, you see. I really blame myself excessively, but it can't be helped now." The poor Professor groped in his mind for a suitable

way of alluding to Mrs. Malory's death, and jerked out, "I've heard the sad news from a sailor on board — a disappointed man apparently — dear me! so very sudden and sad, but we must be brave, my dear boy."

"The Captain has been awfully good to us," said Dick.

"We must thank him heartily, Thomas. Ah! yes, that is to say, Wrixon. Of course, of course. I was thinking of the editor of *Morte d'Arthur* for the moment."

"And this is Nan, sir."

"And are you a very good little girl?" asked the Professor.

Nan had been contemplating the strange gentleman with the beard for some time. She always associated goodness with education, and promptly replied, "Oh yes, I can count so nicely."

Mr. Wintersea felt immediately on his own ground. "Count, can you? How many can you count, my dear?"

"Almost as many as there is," replied Nan proudly; and this so pleased the Professor that he laughed heartily, and almost forgot his recent fears.

"And now, Wrixon, about our plans. Your train for the west to-morrow leaves Paddington in the morning at 11.45, I find. What about this afternoon?" he added nervously, dreading the thought of being left alone with the boy; "unfortunately Sunday is such a bad day for seeing London."

"May I keep charge of them till the morning, as a favour?" asked the Captain. "I promised Dick to take him down to the ship again; he wanted to have a last look at her."

The Professor was relieved, and the request was so sincerely expressed that he could have no hesitation in agreeing to it. He thanked the Captain cordially, and turned to Dick.

"You will perhaps excuse my accompanying you, Wrixon. There is an engagement I had made for five o'clock which I should be glad to keep. I should like to have seen more of the *Candia*, though there was a sailor, — a very unfavourable specimen of his class, I fear, but, poor fellow, we must make allowances — at first he was not very polite."

"Confound the fellow!" exclaimed the Captain. "I'll — "

"Oh pray take no notice of it!" cried the Professor anxiously. "I assure you a mere absence of formality in manner, a seafaring bluntness, merely, quite refreshing in fact. I will call for you, Wrixon, at nine o'clock to-morrow morning, and perhaps we may see something of London on the way to the station. Now what would you like to see particularly?"

A great field for choice was spread before this boy, for whom England was the land of all that was wonderful and pleasant, and London, though he had been somewhat disappointed with what he had already seen of it, the centre of that wonderland.

"Of course there's the inside of the Tower of London, sir, and there's St. Paul's, and Westminster Abbey, and Newgate, and the Horse Guards, and I suppose," he added, with some condescension, "Nan would like to see the Zoo. And would there be a chance of seeing Lords cricket ground?"

"Lords cricket ground? I was never there in my life. Bless me, Wrixon, all you boys are alike: you seem to think London itself a sort of frame to Lords cricket ground, and another place called the Ellipse —or Oval rather. No, I fear we shall not have time; besides, it is nothing but a bit of grass; there are other places of the most profound interest." Then he suddenly remembered the existence of the strange gentleman.

"Bless my soul," he said; "I suppose I'll have to see this gentleman. It is very painful, but I suppose there is no help for it."

"Don't you trouble about him, sir," said the Captain; "you can slip out without his seeing you. He's one of the interfering sort. People who won't mind their own business are a nuisance."

"A very just remark, Captain Bunting, a very just remark," said the Professor. "You have been truly kind; we owe you our heartiest thanks. I can never thank you sufficiently for your courtesy and your care of my dear young relatives. And I have your assurance that the good gentleman was under a misapprehension?"

"Certainly, sir — bar the fo'castle. I spoke to

Dick about that myself; but that was nothing, he's all right."

"Ah yes," answered the Professor, "no doubt, no doubt; a farewell occasion and good wishes; valedictory rum among the mariners, and so forth — very pleasant. I am delighted to have made your acquaintance. Good-bye. Good-bye, my dear children. Nine o'clock to-morrow morning."

The Professor departed very well pleased with the manner in which he had discharged his duties. He wrote a letter to Mr. Wrixon detailing the circumstances of the meeting, and then dismissed the children from his mind and returned to his problem in mathematics.

## CHAPTER II.

### UNCLES AMONG THE RUINS.

Mr. Humphry Wrixon sat in his favourite corner of the old walled garden of Farinder Priory. It was December, but the day was so genial that he, a lover of warmth, had left his armchair in the library and brought out his books. Humphry was a bachelor of forty-five, plump and clean-shaven, his contented countenance so like that of the representative monk of the painter that, differently clad, he might have passed for one of the ten canons of the order of St. Augustine who had once sought seclusion in this quiet corner of the world. The warm wall behind him was bright with blossoms of yellow jasmine; a robin sang in an apple-tree; pleasant country sounds came from the distance, — the lowing of cattle, the talk of the rookery, the hum of the threshing-machine, suddenly falling half an octave in tone as a new sheaf went between the rollers. On his knee was a copy of *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius, in his mouth an enormous pipe.

He had excited some curiosity in the neighbourhood when he had joined his brother at Farinder; but, as there was no lady in the establishment, little

more was known about him now than when he first came. Even his brother had been surprised at his choice, and had received no other explanation for it than that the Priory contained an excellent cellar in which he could keep his wine, and a room which could be converted into a good library for his books. His brother was fifteen years his senior; he had retired early from the navy, and, after wandering about for a few years an aimless widower, had bought the ruined Priory, which was a fragment of family property. He was a man who had been proposed by nature as an artist, and disposed by a stern parent in the navy. The old buildings were to him a sacred charge; it was his daily task to prevent their falling into further ruin. He was a sculptor of some ability, and in one of the outbuildings, which he had converted into a workshop, he did loving daily work in clay and stone.

Nothing disturbed Humphry, not even the advent of the young people, which had fluttered his brother with pleasant excitement. He had found their presence agreeable, his habits were in no way disturbed by them, and they had brought with them a new brightness to the daily life. Dick pleased him; he looked upon him critically as a probable inheritor of his wine and his books, the possessions he valued most, and he was hopeful that with judicious training he might become worthy of the double responsibility.

After finishing his pipe, Humphry remembered

that Squire Longfield, the only neighbour who was a regular visitor at the Priory, was coming with his boy to dine that night, and that a few words with the cook would be necessary. He strolled out of the garden into the garth, passing through a gateway, on each side of which was a shield: one charged with the five Holy Wounds, the other with a chevron between three bugle-horns. The garth had been used as a farmyard for generations, and the outbuildings and even the chapel had, after the dissolution of the monastery, been converted into farm buildings. A look of special satisfaction was on his face as he passed Ovens, Nan's maid; for he remembered that the month's notice to leave which she had given immediately on arrival expired in a few days. Ovens, on being asked why she wished to leave, had said that she liked life too much to stay in such a place. With Voweraker junior, son of the old out-door servant, he exchanged friendly greeting. Voweraker junior, holding a ladder against the chapel wall, was waiting for Mr. Wrixon, who was about to ascend to remove some encroaching ivy from the tracery of a window. Voweraker senior had gone to Wayland to buy a cow for Nan's particular benefit.

He found his brother within the chapel wistfully contemplating some uncarved blocks of stone at the intersection of four of the arch mouldings in the nave. These, and some unfinished column capitals in the chancel, had been left unexecuted at the dissolution. Humphry knew that it was the old man's

highest ambition to complete these himself, and that his veneration for the old work was such that he hesitated to touch them.

"Well, John," he said, "you are thinking of making a beginning perhaps?"

Humphry spoke very slowly, lingering on every word as though he loved it, drawling at such times as he was serious. He had also a difficulty with his letter "*r*," and was sometimes obliged to make his "*w*" do double service.

"It would be sacrilege, Humphry," replied Mr. Wrixon. "It would be like an inferior man undertaking to complete a book which another had left unfinished when he died."

"But these two look so lonely by themselves. When I see them I feel inclined to finish the others myself for the sake of giving them some society. They have been waiting three hundred years for the birth of their friends. And it is not like completing an unfinished book; each of these heads is complete in itself."

"I don't agree with you, Humphry. The two already finished show signs of the same hand. It is my belief that the sculptor had an idea which he meant to carry out through the series. Poor fellow! I expect he died, and his companions would allow no one else to continue his work."

"My dear brother," Humphry protested, "I am perfectly convinced you are mistaken. You know the monastic life had sunk low before the dissolu-

tion, and it is my belief that these heads are uncarved because the monks were too lazy to do the work, — they were too fat to go up ladders."

"I wish you would be serious sometimes, Humphry. Well, perhaps some day I may attempt the work. I wonder if there is any chance of Dick taking to sculpture; he likes coming to the workshop."

"That's to avoid lessons."

"Well, perhaps so, but if he should take up sculpture some day as his profession it would be a great delight to me. We shall have to think seriously about his education, Humphry; it has been greatly neglected. I wanted him to do a little Latin this morning, but he says it is the holidays, and Tom Longfield has come home. They have gone off together somewhere."

"We shall have to send the fellow to school."

"Yes," replied Mr. Wrixon, with reluctance, "after a year, I think. We might coach him a little at home first."

Humphry entered the house through a door at the end of the chapel. He went to his library, and, after replacing *The Golden Ass* on the shelf, opened a cupboard and took out a decanter containing some very excellent bitter sherry, and a plate of biscuits. Then he rang the bell and had an audience with the cook. This was a daily occurrence, — the sole part which he took in the management of the household, — but to-day he had some special instructions to give on account of the expectation of visitors. He in-

formed Mrs. Collop that a barrel of oysters would be sent up during the afternoon by the carrier, and expounded to her some sound doctrine on her duty towards her snipe. The income of the brothers was moderate, but their expenses were few, and Humphry regarded the possession of a good cook as a necessity. He had himself gone to London some years before to secure one, and had brought Mrs. Collop back with him. Having concluded this, the only business of his day, and finished his abstemious lunch, he again went out into the sunshine. This time he strolled down the avenue towards the village.

The Priory was well placed on the hill to catch the best of the sunshine. It looked down on the roofs of the village, and the broad grass-grown street. To the north the woodland sloped to the moor, and westward there was a peep of the channel.

It was pleasant in the fields this morning; the sunshine fell cheerfully on farm and cottage; on thatched roofs the bright green moss had crimson patches; the leafless woods wore their delicate winter hues of madder and dusky green; the bare hedges were bright with scarlet berries; and in the far distance the green country-side passed into misty blue against the pale blue sky. On the grass beside the pathway the moles had upturned fresh mounds of red earth; plovers were wheeling, black to white, against a cloud; a ruffle of wind came from the south.

He stopped to talk with wayfarers in the road, or the village children coming from school. He had

a fraternal word for everyone: he did not think highly of human nature, but he loved it none the less on that account. He paused to watch the rooks. He and the Priory rooks understood each other; his presence never disturbed them, they regarded him as one of themselves; and them he regarded as friends, as monks, apart from the world, untouched by the changes of time, yet understanding man, and dwelling near the homes of the trustworthy; as philosophers, neither hurrying nor exulting, but leading godly lives of daily content.

"Life is very pleasant," he thought, "very pleasant. For those who are content to take what it gives, it gives so much; and those who are always asking something which it cannot give deserve to be unhappy, and do not understand what they want." He remembered a disappointment of the past, a dream, an ideal which he had once cherished. This thought made him grave for a few moments; then the smile of satisfaction returned to his face. "Yes," he mused, "life is very good, if you don't take it seriously."

## CHAPTER III.

### VOWERAKER DROPS A SPARK.

THAT evening after dinner a merry party gathered round the deep fire-place in the refectory at the Priory. The sound of such laughter had not been heard since the time of the canons; for the quiet farm folk who had afterwards occupied the building were not given to mirth. The presence of youth radiated; the great fire of peat and logs looked pleasanter now that there were young eyes to read the pictures in it; the basset hound, who had usually slept at this hour on former evenings, lay on the rug with open, contented eyes.

The conversation was of stag hunting, and other subjects dear to boys and pleasant to their elders. Tom wanted little encouragement to talk: he produced fragments of schoolboy lore, which were marvellous to Dick; he knew all the cricket averages of the best players for the last three years; he dimly hinted that he himself was writing the life of Jupp, the Surrey professional, though it afterwards transpired that that work had not progressed beyond the first sentence: "Henry Jupp first saw the light at Clapham, in the county of Surrey."

Although it was winter, Tom had a purpose in introducing the theme of cricket. A new ground was being made for the village on one of his father's fields, which had one fault from a player's point of view, though this fault was one of its charms to an uncritical spectator: it was surrounded by fine old trees. Tom wished to see some of these trees removed. He had ventured the request once without success, but he had then been alone with his father. Now, he craftily calculated that his good humour and the presence of others might induce him to be reasonable.

"I suppose you've seen the new field?" he asked Dick, with an air of indifference.

"Yes, where they are stripping the turf off," replied Dick.

"There won't be a better village ground in the county. It has only one disadvantage, the light is bad — rather too many trees. I say, governor, do you mind giving Mr. Banks permission to have down two or three of the elms at the top and bottom of the field? They'll interfere with the light for a catch in the country. I know they're good trees, but we have any amount of others. Just four of the elms, sir?"

"No, I'm damned if I will," said the Squire, suddenly growing angry. "Why, boy, you'd turn the game into a piece of machinery. When I was a lad we went to the wicket like men, begad, and took our chance of a crack on the legs. Now you muffle your shins in padding and your hands in india-

rubber. Psh, and you must have screens behind the wicket; and, because you're such confounded young butter-fingers, you say you can't see the ball, and want to cut down my trees. Upon my soul, it's too bad. I wish I'd never allowed the new ground to be made on my land, begad."

Tom took refuge behind the authority of the Church. "Oh, just as you like, sir," he replied, in an aggrieved tone, "but I'm not the only one who thinks so. Mr. Middleton said it would be a thousand pities to see a first-class ground spoilt for the sake of a few trees."

"Well, Middleton ought to know better," thundered the Squire — "a clergyman of the Church of England, and a Conservative. Does he want to see the country stripped bare? A parson, Wrixon, would you believe it? If I'd known he had ideas of that sort he wouldn't have had the living, begad. We'll have you asking us to take down the fences next, because it's easier to cross country without 'em."

"Well, I shan't be at home much, so it won't make much difference to me," Tom remarked, rather defiantly.

"What should you say about it, Wrixon, if the trees were yours?" asked the Squire, cooling down.

"I should keep the trees," replied Mr. Wrixon, laughing.

"Of course you would. No, Tom — look here, I'll double my subscription to the club, but the trees won't come down; that's settled."

Tom saw that further argument was useless, and said no more.

Mr. Wrixon sent for Nan, who had disappeared just before the guests arrived. A little frown of perplexity gathered on his brow as he glanced from Mr. Longfield's cigar to Humphry's pipe. The long absence of ladies' society had made them careless about many of their habits at the Priory, but he began to be thoughtful on Nan's account; her surroundings should be as refined, he argued, as if she had a mother.

"Don't you think, Humphry," he suggested, "that the smoke might make the child cough? Eh, excuse me, Longfield, I forgot you were smoking too, — she'll be off to bed, you know, in a few minutes."

"Oh, she doesn't mind smoking a bit, sir," said Dick; "she got accustomed to it at sea."

Nan came into the room with a plate in her hand and tears in her eyes. On the plate were five fox-terrier puppy dogs' tails, arranged in a row.

"My dear child, what have you got there?" asked Mr. Wrixon.

Humphry laid down his pipe and regarded her and her plate with great interest. The boys exchanged comical glances; they had themselves assisted at the amputation of the tails.

"Cruel, naughty boys!" said Nan, "you let them do it. They've cut off the poor, poor little puppies' tails."

Mr. Wrixon took her on his knee and tried to comfort her.

"They won't never wag again," she said dolefully.

"But you know, my dear," said Mr. Wrixon, "all little puppy dogs of this sort have their tails cut off."

This information brought small comfort.

"But," she insisted, "their eyes opened yesterday when they was ten days old, and if their tails *had* to be cut off, why wasn't they done before they opened their eyes, and then they'd never have known they ever had any tails, and wouldn't have minded so much?"

"You are a very wise little girl," said Humphry gravely, amid the laughter of the others; "and when Gin has any more pups we'll not wait so long, or not cut them off at all."

"Fox-terriers, Humphry, fox-terriers," remonstrated Mr. Longfield.

"Why should they be cut off at all?" asked Nan.

"I don't think they ought to be cut off, Nan," replied her champion; "they might be very useful to them sometime or other. Once upon a time"—the magic words banished her sorrow—"once upon a time there was a poor sailor who was wrecked at sea, and left out alone in a boat with his dog, which he had saved. They had nothing to eat for several days, and the man was almost starving, and so was the dog. He would not kill the dog and eat him, because he loved him, so what do you think he did?"

"Killed himself, and gave himself to the poor starving dog," said Nan, much interested.

"No, he did something better; he cut off the dog's tail, and cooked it, and ate it, and gave the dog the bone."

Humphry and Nan remained solemn, unmoved by the laughter of the others.

"Did they get safely to their home?" she asked.

"Yes, my dear; a good ship picked them up the next morning and brought them safe to land, and the poor dog wanted to wag his tail for joy, and had not got one to wag."

Nan went off to bed happy, leaving her plate of tails behind her. Humphry took it up and addressed the boys in a portentous tone.

"These puppy dogs' tails are an illustration of the rights of the masses, which they are born with. In former times they lost their rights, as the puppies often lose their tails, before their eyes were opened: now their eyes are opened, and they see them being taken away. Whether rights are good for the people, or tails for fox-terriers, is another matter. In both cases their masters think they look better without them."

"Really, Humphry, is it desirable to put such notions into the boys' heads?" said his brother, rather testily; "they may think you are in earnest."

"Well," Humphry yielded, "leave the masses and apply the illustration to the case of woman."

"Oh," cried the Squire, losing all patience, "what

the devil do you want us to believe? Do you want me to think that a fox-terrier ought to have a long tail, and every ignorant blackguard in the country have the same rights as his betters? And you'd give every may-cow of a woman a vote, and make 'em doctors and lawyers, begad."

"On the contrary," replied Humphry. "Personally, though I think it is rather unjust, I prefer to see a fox-terrier without a tail, and a woman without her rights."

"Well, why did you say the opposite?" said the Squire, immediately mollified. "What a humbug you are, Humphry. One never knows whether you are in earnest or not. This uncle of yours is an old humbug, Dick, and you must be careful to take what he says with a grain of salt. D'ye hear — *multis granis* — that's good Latin, ain't it, Wrixon?" The Squire laughed heartily, and the boys joined him. Mr. Wrixon produced a backgammon board.

"What do you say to our game, Longfield?" he asked; "I want my revenge. By the way, next time you're passing in daylight I wish you'd have a look at a little cow I bought to-day for the young lady's special benefit. You boys can be off for a bit, if you like."

They were ready enough to take advantage of the permission. Tom had a visit to the inn and the introduction of his new friend to some village institutions in view.

"I say," said he, when they were outside, "you

don't suppose old Humphry was in earnest, do you? He can't be a Radical? I believe he was drawing my parent. You're a Conservative, of course? I suppose you're going into the army?"

"If they'll let me," replied Dick. "I don't know whether I can afford it. I mean to, if I can."

"Oh, you must work it. I am. After next term I'm going to read for a bit with a coach, and then I'm going to Sandhurst. I say, Malory, I do hope there'll be a jolly good war soon after I get in. I wonder who it's likely to be with — the Germans, I suppose."

"It's a pity they've beaten the French," said Dick, meditatively. "I should like to have begun on the French, and I don't like the idea of any one but us licking the French. I'd like to fight the French because they are gentlemen. My governor said the Germans were not."

"It is a pity," Tom assented sadly; "and besides, there won't be so much credit in licking the French now that the Germans have done it."

"But fighting isn't as good as it used to be," Dick continued. "What a lark it must have been for a knight with a few followers to have taken a castle himself."

"Oh, but there's plenty of good fighting left," Tom argued. "Look at Balaklava. I mean to get into a cavalry regiment if I can."

"And if I can't afford to go in as an officer I suppose I shall have to enlist," said Dick, "and

work up. I don't see why a gentleman shouldn't enlist."

The word gentleman was still full of significance for him: it summed up the religion of his father. Goethe remarked that the beautiful was greater than the good, forasmuch as the beautiful included the good: the late Captain Malory held that good breeding was greater than morality, since it included morality, or, at least, so much as was necessary. Honour was to him the thing of paramount importance; it even justified the duel under certain circumstances, and he had himself fought one. He had instilled some of his ideas on the subject into his son.

"I knew two fellows who were gentlemen who enlisted," Tom said. "If it comes to that, you enlist in my regiment, and I'll do all I can to shove you on, old chap, but I hope you'll work it without."

As they came to the village the boys fell into the attitude towards each other of host and guest. Tom made a suitable impression on his companion. At the inn he called the landlord's daughter by her Christian name, complimented her upon her personal appearance, and as he entered the inn room, where the village company was assembled, he actually lighted a cigar. The presence of the boys produced a mental awakening among the company; the pauses in the talk were fewer; they made no more personal remarks about cows.

Souls these simple folks no doubt possessed, but they were hidden away and lost in their bodies.

Or, if the body be the clothing of the soul, in their case it did not seem as if they had been measured; there was a want of proportion in the amount of body and the amount of soul, which resembled the condition of an urchin in his father's breeches. They were as so many flints with hidden lights, but not able to strike them for each other. Tom was as the necessary steel, and won sparks from them: he had a charm to rouse them and make them laugh; he seemed to know what to say to each, and was very popular among them.

The old inn room, with settle and chimney seats; the low ceiling, from the great beam of which depended sides of bacon dangerously hanging over the heads of subjacent rustics; the rustics themselves with ruddy faces, slowly responsive and kindly — some of them bearing marks of acquaintance with half a century's beer and hard weather, comparable to the coloured clay pipe on which no thought has been bestowed, just as other faces delicately tinted with port wine are suggestive of the well-toned meershaum — all made a pleasant scene, picturesque in its way, and novel to Dick.

Tom introduced him, — his friend Mr. Malory who had come to live in this country.

Dick rose to the occasion; he said he was very glad to make their acquaintance, and hoped they would do him the honour of allowing him to order drinks for them all. This produced a very favourable impression, and met with Tom's hearty approval.

The landlord took the order with a beaming face, and chairs were brought for the boys.

"You'll be down here now for a bit, maybe, Master Tom?" inquired a farmer.

"Well," said Tom, "yes, a month or so, and then I shall have to prepare for the army."

"Ah, well now, well, to be sure," said the landlord; "so you won't stay with us, you're for the army? well now."

"You see," explained Tom, regarding his cigar ash critically, "the country must have defenders, and although it's pleasant enough here in the old place, a man must not shirk his duty."

This remark was received with a murmur of approbation.

"And duty's duty," remarked the butcher, "and foreigners wants teaching their place."

"Ah," observed an old herdsman, "they're funny chaps, they foreigners — fights wi' knives, they say. I wouldn't like to live along with 'em from what I do hear. I don't know the sensation of 'em myself, but it's what I do hear, gentlemen."

"Hullo!" cried Dick, "if that isn't old Voweraker, and I believe he's drunk."

Voweraker had been sleeping unobserved in a corner, and was now aroused amid general laughter. He was drunk for the first time since he had been in Mr. Wrixon's employment. It was a great day in his life, a cow had been bought. Things had gone along so uneventfully at the Priory until now, his

duties were of so unimposing a kind, that the thought of the responsibility attending the care of a cow fascinated him; he felt a new dignity. He had himself been entrusted with the purchase, and the occasion had been too great for considerations of prudence.

"Voweraker," said Dick, "you are drunk."

"It's like this here, Mr. Dick, and gen'lemen all," said Voweraker, staggering to his feet. "Who says I'm drunk says wrong. Maybe I've overstepped the bounds o' prudence. But this little cow, oh dear, oh dear. Hast thee ever heard I sing, Master Dick?"

"Don't make a fool o' theeself, John," said a neighbour; "sit down and keep quiet, the beer's hurt thee back, thee casn't stand straight."

"Beer!" said Voweraker indignantly, "don't 'ee talk to I o' beer, give me a nice drop o' zider, *I* say, better than all the beer, *I* say. And that little cow, God bless her — a better milker, gen'lemen, and Mr. Dick, where'll you find? I ask, meanin' no offence."

"Some o' Squire's cows have a great name," suggested one of the company.

"Squire Longfield's a gen'leman," replied Voweraker, "so he be, and his cows is good cows, as they am. Squire Longfield's a gen'leman, and he 'on't deny it, and young Mr. Tom settin there as happy as a king, he 'on't deny it. Eh, but he's a fine lad, he be. What a leg 'er got on 'er, han't 'er?"

In spite of his use of the feminine pronoun it was understood that he had called upon the company to admire Tom's leg, not the cow's, and Tom had to submit to general scrutiny, feeling rather uncomfortable.

"It's a fine family, friends," continued Voweraker, "young Tom's a fine lad, and Miss Margaret, her's a straightbacked likely maid. Likely thee'll go coortin' there some day, Mas'r Dick?"

This speech was received with great laughter; but Voweraker was becoming unbearable. Dick blushed scarlet.

"Shut up, you old donkey," he said, angrily, "you're getting cheeky. If you say any more we'll put you under the pump. I say, Tom, oughtn't we to be going?"

More laughter followed at Voweraker's expense; he was crestfallen; and, when the boys left, he was weeping copiously and making incoherent references to the cow.

Tom was in great spirits as they walked home. He was pleased with the impression he felt he had produced on Dick as showman, and he was satisfied with the way in which his friend had conducted himself. They laughed at the villagers and made plans for the next day; they were already fast friends.

"I shall tell Peggy what Voweraker said about you going courting her," said Tom.

"Oh, don't," Dick interrupted quickly; "no lady

would like to think her name had been made free with among a lot of yokels at an inn."

"Oh, it's nothing," Tom assured him. "Fancy Peggy minding!"

"I should be much obliged if you wouldn't," said Dick.

"Oh, well, if you make a point of it I won't."

He became suddenly preoccupied, but just as they were approaching the Priory gates he addressed Dick, confidentially: "I say, old fellow, did you happen to notice the girl I was with this afternoon. The girl in furs, you know, who's staying with us?"

"Rather," Dick replied.

"Isn't she ripping?"

"Ripping," Dick assented; but at the same time he made a note that she was not to be compared with Tom's sister Margaret. Voweraker's random remark had set him thinking.

## CHAPTER IV.

### FIRST LOVE.

THE coming of his first English spring was a great event to Dick, both for its own sake, and because with it came his first love.

Love is generally in possession of the heart for some little time before he is discovered. He is a stowaway on the ship, who does not declare his presence until there is no chance of putting him ashore; he comes into the heart in some other guise, as the Greeks came into Troy; and, when nothing is suspected, it is suddenly found that the citadel is taken.

Voweraker's words had made Dick aware that he had fallen in love with Tom's sister. After this life began to look different; there was something new and delightful and painful in it. At his studies he was not so attentive as usual — a sure sign of a disturbed heart or stomach. His uncles noticed it, and blamed the wrong organ.

Dick was perplexed as to how to act; whether to confide in Tom, whose return to school had been delayed by a humiliating attack of measles, or boldly to see the lady herself. At one time he considered the desirability of an interview with the Squire

before making any advances to his daughter; he had heard that this was considered an honourable course, but it did not commend itself to him, and he remembered no precedent for it in the loves of the days of chivalry. At last he decided upon a letter to Margaret. The composition of it cost him some anxiety, and he passed the interval of a couple of days between its despatch and the receipt of the reply in a state of great unrest.

On the second day Tom appeared, and, with a look of gravity — a certain superiority, as became the lady's relative — handed him in silence a note written in a handwriting in which only the eye of love could have discerned grace. Dick put it in his pocket nervously; he could not read it before Tom, but Tom seemed to understand, and, with a preoccupied air, begged Dick not to think of him — he had several things on his own mind, and would take a short walk and return in half an hour. Dick climbed the church-tower as a place of seclusion to devour his letter. It contained the following matter: —

MY DEAR DICK, — I was so surprised to get your note. I shall keep the flowers till I die. For goodness sake don't say a word to the governor or any one but Tom. Tom knows all about it. He will understand. Tom loves too. Je vous aime. — In haste, yours truly,

MARGARET SELWYN LONGFIELD.

It was a moment of intoxication. He descended the tower rapidly. The sight of Humphry sent him

back again. Then he began to surround his new possessions with imaginary insecurity. What if she should change her mind? He read the letter over again.

"My dear Dick" and "yours truly" read rather coldly, but then, he argued, that was only becoming maidenly reserve. His critical sense received a momentary shock at her allusion to "the governor," but the insight of love gave him power of interpretation. After all, it was a noble phrase — "the governor." It showed that the daughter really regarded the father in the light of a superior being, in whose governance her life was placed. She would keep the flowers till she died: gentle being! The allusion to her mortality almost brought tears to his eyes. And then in the French phrase there was something altogether subtle and charming. She could not bring herself to write the words in common English; she spoke them in a foreign tongue. Yes, the letter was perfect as the writer.

At the end of half an hour Tom returned, his head bent, his bright smile gone.

"I know all about this affair between you and Peggy," he said, as they walked down the avenue together. "Well, you have my consent, old boy. It's not every one finds matters run as smoothly as you have."

This Dick admitted.

"I suppose," continued Tom, "you're too full of your own affairs to listen to those of any one else.

Old Pegtops isn't a bad sort of girl, but what a fellow can see in her to fall in love with beats me."

"She's —" Dick could find no adequate words of praise. "I wish you would not call her 'Pegtops,'" he protested.

"There are troubles," Tom continued, unmoved, "which you happily know nothing of." He sighed profoundly. "Dick, I'm in love, and I'm miserable. I feel my life is wrecked. I can't eat, and I can't read, and I'm certain I shall get spun for Sandhurst. I believe she cares more for another man."

"I say, that's serious. Where does she live, and who is she?"

"Well, I don't mind telling you, Dick; it's Miss Medley; you saw her at Christmas. She wore furs, you remember?"

"But she's grown up," said Dick.

"She's two years and ten months older than me, and I should like to know what difference that makes, and I'm told I look old for my age. She certainly gave me every encouragement at Christmas. She — well, I'm not at liberty to tell you what passed. I took her in to supper — there wasn't a girl there got better looked after at supper — and by Jove, Dick, didn't she look lovely?"

"Lovely," assented Dick. "I saw you dancing together, and I wished I could dance like you. And now you think she cares for another fellow?"

"I have grave suspicions," said Tom, "and I know some one else is after her. Oh, it is unbearable!

We exchanged letters, Dick. I have a letter from her in my pocket now. It shakes one's faith in the whole sex. I can't bear this suspense. I want action of some kind. I should like at this moment to be in a football scrimmage."

"No," Dick corrected him, "a cavalry charge would be the thing, a charge like the Light Brigade."

"Yes, you're quite right, a cavalry charge *is* the thing. Of course, I don't despair."

"Who's the other chap?"

Tom looked terrible. "Who do you think? That horrid old General Adams, the governor's friend, an old, selfish bachelor, a stiff-kneed, wrinkled, pot-bellied old beast. It makes me sick to think of it. The governor said at breakfast he shouldn't wonder if Adams settled down after all, and mentioned his admiration for Kitty, and said what a good thing it would be for her, as she has no coin. 'Adams is hit at last,' said he, 'and Kitty'd make him a sweet, little wife. I'm half in love with her myself.' I left the table, Dick, it was unbearable."

"It was the only thing to do," Dick replied, sympathetically.

"I'd call him out," continued Tom, "only people don't fight duels now, and besides, the old wineskin wouldn't fight. He'd treat me as if I were a boy; he'd get the governor on his side. No, it won't do at all. I shall have to write to the dear girl, she's gone back to town, you know, and I'm a wretched

hand at composition. Perhaps you can give me a help. I thought something in poetry might tell — girls all like poetry — something about January and May, Dick. You'll think it over, won't you, like a good chap. I'll come round to-night, and we'll write it. By the way, old Pegs said if you'd care to see her, she'll be at home by herself to-morrow afternoon at three o'clock."

"I must really beg of you, Tom, to call your sister by her proper name. What better name do you want than Margaret? Pegs! I'll take it as a favour, Tom."

"Oh! all right," said Tom, departing, "but she answers to that name."

Next day Dick was ushered into the presence of the young lady by her brother. He felt rather awkward, and could not find any words appropriate; the mood in which he had written his letter had deserted him. Margaret was the first to speak.

"It's not quite so cold to-day," she remarked.

"No, indeed," said Dick, "it's beautiful weather."

"And what a jolly morning it was. I rode past the Priory."

"If you two are going to talk about the weather all the afternoon, I'll leave you alone," said Tom. "What's the use of humbugging. Give her a kiss, Dick, like a man."

Dick blushed. A kiss was a sacred thing, belonging to a much later date in courtship than this, to his thinking; but Margaret was not disturbed.

"Mr. Malory knows how to behave as a gentleman," she said. "You're a cheeky boy, Tom, and we don't want you here. Do we?" she appealed to Dick.

Tom chuckled. "Mr. Malory," he repeated, "that's pretty good. Dick, you take my advice, and have a kiss. She likes kissing. I could tell you a thing or two."

A few days afterwards Tom went back to school. He had received no answer to his letter to Miss Medley, but he said that he was hopeful, and that he did not intend to allow his spirit to be crushed, whatever happened; he would not allow any woman to destroy his career; he intended to work hard.

The south-west wind blew up from the sea, and brought days of gentle rain; the feeling of the spring-time was in the air, new scents came from the ground, the snowdrops had come and gone, and the trees were still bare, but the golden flowers of the celandine were bright on grassy banks, and a few early primroses clustered in the shelter of the hedges and tree trunks. Every new flower was a delight to Dick, who saw the wonder of spring now for the first time. It was Margaret who told him the names of the flowers and the birds. She did not feel the same interest in watching the change, but it was a new pleasure to her to be able to give information which could be of interest: Tom had never shown any interest in anything she had ever said. She was given considerable freedom, and came in and went

out much as she pleased, the only enemy she had to fear being her governess; but Miss Templet was a poet, and loved solitude and the opportunity of composing lines for a newspaper in Glamorganshire, to which county she belonged.

Margaret came up constantly to the Priory, ostensible to see Nan. Her visits brought a further cheerfulness to the old place. She would talk to Mrs. Collop in the most friendly way, and compliment her on her young ducks and chickens; she would make jokes to old Voweraker, and more than once Dick, with mingled feelings, saw her milk the cow. She paid constant visits to Mr. Wrixon's workshop. He was well pleased to see his little idol, Nan, taken notice of. Margaret and he became great friends, and there was always a good deal of laughing in the workshop when she came in. Dick's love made him so serious just now that she probably found it a relief to be merry with the old man or to milk the cow. With Humphry she was more on her guard, they regarded each other with a certain coyness and a suspicion that each was quietly amused with something in the other.

She and Dick rode together sometimes, for Tom had made him promise to use his horse while he was away. On one of their rides he ventured, with some hesitation, on a matter which was troubling him, born of Tom's hasty words.

"You know, Margaret," he said, "you are my first love. Am I yours? Did you ever love before?

Don't be offended at my asking, but you know I could not bear the thought of your caring for any one else."

"Why do you ask? I never asked you any questions like that," she replied, provokingly.

"I think I have a right to know," said Dick.

"Then you won't know," she answered, "and if you are going to ask rude questions, I shall not ride any farther with you."

Then there was silence and inward misgivings for about the space of ten minutes, during which they galloped along the turf; but Margaret's horse got on ahead.

"You see, Dick, I have to wait for you," she said, pulling up. "You can't do everything you like with me. Now, don't be cross and I'll tell you. No, I never cared for any one before really — perhaps I may have fancied I did a little, but not really, you know."

And with this he had to be satisfied. It is the explanation which is so often given, and has always to be accepted, between lovers. The last love, it seems, is always the real one; in all the previous ones we had deceived ourselves.

"Margaret," he asked, "what can I do to prove my love to you? I can only say how I love you, but I cannot do anything noble or great to show you."

"I don't want you to do anything, Dick."

Dick was disappointed. "Can't you think of anything you would like me to achieve for you?"

"Well, of course some day you will go into the army and be a hero."

"I mean to try, but now — is there anything you would wish me to do for you now."

"There's one thing I want, Dick. I've been wanting it ever so long for my collection, — a nettle-creeper's egg."

She said this perfectly seriously, and Dick felt like Naaman when he was told to wash in Jordan. It was too trivial — a nettle-creeper's egg in exchange for her love. But, nevertheless, he set to work to find one, and he also thought of another gift, better than this, which should be a pledge between them: he was skilful with his hands, and had learned from one of the sailors on boardship to hammer silver rings from florins and shillings, and he now set to work with great zeal and all the cunning he possessed to fashion one. It was not a bad bit of work, and, with the help of one of Mr. Wrixon's tools, he traced a creditable heart on its surface. The discovery of a nettle-creeper's egg was attended with greater difficulties, as he did not know in the least what a nettle-creeper was like; but this also was at last to yield to the power of love, and both gifts were presented humbly to the lady.

The days sped pleasantly and the course of love ran smoothly until the end of the summer, when Dick's felicity received a sudden disturbance. One morning, with scarcely any preliminary warning in the way of coldness of demeanour from Margaret, he received the following note: —

DEAR MR. MALORY, — Miss Templet and my conscience tell me that we have done wrong in meeting as often as we have. She thinks my father would not approve of it, and that "men were deceivers ever." I'm afraid we must part. We must forget the past. I return the ring. I shall always esteem you. — Yours sincerely,

MARGARET SELWYN LONGFIELD.

Tom returned a few days afterwards. His own love affair had not progressed, but the effects of his failure were not serious. Dick put a question about it when they met, and his brow darkened.

"Never mention her name again," he said; "she is henceforth dead to me."

"Women are all weather-cocks," said Dick, bitterly.

"Yes, weather-cocks ought to be called weather-hens," replied Tom. "I want you to drive down to-morrow with me to Porlock, and we'll have a sail. Come, don't bother about women!"

## CHAPTER V.

### MODELLING IN THE ROUND.

DICK was a hero-worshipper, but he did not always choose his heroes wisely. Schoolboys are apt to despise respectable people more heartily than they deserve, and to exalt the lawless overmuch. At school, Caruthers, his leader, a boy who had chosen him among the juniors for the special honour of his friendship, had committed most of the sins of which boys are proud, but he was good-looking and clever, and had the second best average in the eleven. Dick loved him with all his heart; he delighted in sharing his adventures and doing him service when he should have been working. His hero took the place, and more than the place, of Margaret Longfield in his affection. She was a deity growing with time more and more shadowy, as indeed is the habit of deities.

But at the end of his third term his idol was shattered and his school days came to an end. Caruthers sent him through a window to the study of one of the masters, to get a portfolio of sketches which, he said, belonged to him, and had been unjustly confiscated. Dick was caught; and the portfolio contained not sketches but examination papers. It was

a shameful action. Dick was paralysed when he knew the truth, but he refused to give the name of his chief. He took the consequent castigation, inflicted in the sight of the whole school, like a man, believing firmly that Caruthers would come forward and clear him; but his hero was of base clay and made no sign. After it was over he flung an affectionate arm round Dick's neck and called him a brick. He showed him that if he, a boy in the upper school, were convicted of the crime, he would be expelled; that his father would disown him, and he would be ruined; whereas for a junior the whole thing was different, and would soon be forgotten. Dick suffered far less during the flogging than when he saw his hero in his true light: he despised him and he was indignant; but even then his love for his leader, his remembrance of old favours, prevailed, and he was true to him.

That night, at an hour when the boys were supposed to be in bed, he entertained his dormitory at a farewell supper. Kidneys and sausages were cooked; bottled beer and cider, plates of fruit, cake, a box of cigarettes, and other delicacies were on the table; the neck of a bottle of champagne protruded from a jug on a washhand-stand, where it had been placed to keep cool. He had been supplied that morning with funds for his travelling, and the payment of some small bills, and had, after allowing enough for a third-class ticket home, spent the remnant on his feast.

"This is one of the few advantages of a private school," remarked Theobald minor. "They couldn't do this at a public school. I have a brother at Rugby; they stick a sixth form boy into every dormitory."

"This is the first supper I remember at the end of a term," said Crabb, "there's no coin left. I mean to have one, beginning of next term, and I invite you all."

Dick looked mysterious. "I suppose you fellows think I really went after the examination papers," said he. "Well, I didn't."

No one believed him, but he was their host, and they were discreetly silent. He had an important announcement to make, but he reserved it until the uncorking of the champagne. It was a solemn gathering; prudence forbade sounds of revelry. Micklejohn, a small boy, delicately thoughtful for Dick's tenderness after castigation, brought a pillow from a bed and placed it beneath him on the hard chair.

Dick acknowledged the courtesy, but said he did not so much object to the pain as its locality. It was a distinct indignity to inflict punishment there. The Spartans boasted that they never received wounds in the back; but to themselves no alternative was given: the marks implied flight or submission. Jones secundus comforted him by the reminder that they were out of sight.

As the meal progressed they became more hilarious. After the champagne was opened — it had to

be divided amongst eight boys — Dick made his speech. He repeated his statement that he was innocent; he said that he had been that afternoon to the headmaster and told him so, and had not been believed. He had therefore decided to leave the school at daybreak next morning. He would not call it running away. He would leave a place where the word of a gentleman was not taken.

The news caused much excitement; he became exalted in their eyes. Little Eustace, the youngest boy in the dormitory, shed tears.

"It's rather too much to be treated as a liar," said Dick.

"Well, after all, I suppose we *are* liars," said Theobald minor, who was matter-of-fact. "No mistake we *do* tell stickers."

"Not 'on your honour,'" said Dick. "Stuffing a fellow's one thing, but if you give your honour the thing's different."

The distinction was admitted, and Dick's health was drunk. After this "He's a jolly good fellow" was sung up the chimney, and without being found out they went to sleep in an atmosphere of sausages and tobacco smoke. Next morning before breakfast Dick was gone.

The reports of his progress, which Mr. Wrixon had received, had been so unsatisfactory that he was not sorry to have the boy under his eye again. He did not send him to another school, but kept him at home, where he soon fell back into the old routine

of study which had been instituted when he first came to the Priory. This subsequently included a regular attendance in Mr. Wrixon's workshop. Here he made good advancement, and encouraged the old man in his hope that sculpture might become his profession.

Tom Longfield had passed his examinations and was at Sandhurst; Margaret was at school in France. Dick had no other friends of his own age at Farinder, and his life was now very quiet. The influence of his surroundings was manifest; he ceased to long for wild adventure; his heart was no longer set on going into the army, but he stored his brain with books of old romance. For the present, his ideal was in a world of imagination, and not in a world of action. Mr. Wrixon was confident that he would find his vocation in art; but Humphry believed that there was an undercurrent of restlessness in his nature, and that in the world of action, only, he would be content.

The time came when a decision had to be made, and Dick consulted Humphry on the subject.

"Now what do you consider," he asked him, "the finest thing a man can be? I may as well choose the best."

"I see you want to be a hero," replied Humphry. "The easiest way is to become a politician, but for that you have not the necessary qualifications. The next is to be a prominent ecclesiastic with hazy views, but, alas! I fear you have not the necessary piety.

Fighting, except perhaps the occasional cuffing of disorderly Africans, has ceased to be a function of the army — besides with only a couple of hundred a year you can't afford the army. There is a good chance for an active man as a professional cricketer; and the man of science, if he only has the good fortune to discover anything which is humiliating to his race, may win notoriety. It seems to me, old fellow, that you are not fit to be a hero."

"Who wants to be," said Dick. "I said nothing about heroes. But I must be something. I might as well choose a thing really worth doing, and you haven't left anything."

"What do you feel good for yourself?"

"Almost anything."

"That's capital, Dick. Do you think you could write poetry? We want a new poet very much."

"No, I should think not!"

"What do you say to sculpture?"

"I should never be good enough."

"Do you like it?

"I'm getting to like 't more and more."

"Well, you think about it seriously, Dick. You can't get rich at it, but it's honest, clean work, and you may let off all your bottled-up poetry on it, and even have admirers if you do it nicely, and consider it worth while. But think it well over. Sculpture will never make you a popular hero in England."

The result of this conversation and some after meditation was that Dick delighted Mr. Wrixon's

heart by announcing to him that he desired to become a sculptor. It was true that in this he did not wholly realise his dream of a career, but nothing else seemed so promising; and why, he argued, in spite of Humphry, who laughed at everything heroic, should he not, through his noble art, bring honour to his name and race. Fear of ridicule made him silent about his ambitions before Humphry, but when Margaret Longfield came home from France he confided some of his hopes to her. She did not sympathise much with his choice of a profession. She was disappointed that he was not going into the army. She objected to her old chum, the reckless Dick, talking seriously about art. She chaffed him, told him his hair wanted cutting, but supposed that long hair was good for a sculptor, and promised to ride with him next day if he would not talk nonsense. Dick was highly offended, but next day he rode with her, and there was no more reference to art or ambition. They were no longer lovers, but they were friends to the heart's core. Dick perhaps accepted the new relationship as too final to please Margaret.

She felt it later on, when the time came to say good-bye, and he left home to begin the world as a student of sculpture in London. Dick was then eighteen; Margaret two years younger, a light-hearted girl, fresh as a breezy morning, cool, but with promise of warmth later on. Her figure was charming, her face provoked doubt. Different eyes

read it differently. She was thought plain by none, pretty by many, — beautiful no one had called her. After he had gone there was a shade of vexation on her face as she thought of his leave-taking. She had allowed him to give her a kiss, but then what a brotherly kiss it had been. Not that she was in love with him, she was quite sure about that; but she would willingly have felt that she had the power of awakening his love if she cared to do so. She was very young, but a girl begins early to enjoy the feeling that the fountains of love in male hearts are responsive to her touch — obedient as those in the rock of the wilderness to the hand of Moses. Unfortunately, when she does smite definitely, with the object of making the fountain flow, it is too often on irresponsive clay; and subsequently she may find the fountains in the way which convenience and circumstances arrange for her, as it were through the taps of the local water company.

Humphry Wrixon said good-bye to his nephew with a mixture of amusement and solicitude. He was amused at the magnitude of his expectations, his unbounded faith in human nature: he perceived inevitable disillusion, and consequent unhappiness. He counselled him to beware of hoping too much of the world, but to little purpose. Dick was in love with life, and such warnings were like those of a discreet friend who points out the imperfections of a lady to her worshipper.

## CHAPTER VI.

### ADVENTURES OF A TRAMP.

ENGLAND laughed in young green under dappled skies of early June; the wind sang of the sunshine; the orchards were in blossom; the swallows dropped in a line on a rail and then dived again across the meadows; long waves of wind passed, leaving the near trees silent, and a minute afterwards they were sounding in the distance among the trees across the field. There was a prodigality of light everywhere, — fountains of gold, wells of green; an overflow of light in a world which tossed and waved in warm gladness.

Dick had chosen to begin his career on foot. Of the breadth of England unknown and unexplored, which lay between him and London, more than half had been traversed. The beauty and solitude of the west was behind him: the country was flatter, the towns were more frequent, travellers on the road more numerous. This journey, this setting out to face the world, appeared to him an occasion of great importance, befitting adventure; but hitherto no adventure had been granted.

He had made good stages of some five-and-twenty

miles each day, resting by night at village inns or farmhouses, fraternising with every one he met, eating a meal whenever a chance of one was offered. One morning he rose with the farm labourers and was on foot in dewy lanes before sunrise. Whenever there was a stream to be found he ended a day's tramp with a plunge. After dinner he would sit with the village folk and smoke. Humphry had warned him against the practice of smoking, but had, nevertheless, made him a farewell present of a pipe. Dick was well pleased with himself and with the world; he was satisfied that nothing could really go wrong with either.

One evening, when he was some three days' journey from London, he drew near a large village from which came sounds which struck strangely on the wonted quiet of the summer nightfall, — sounds of the steam organ and the shooting gallery, voices of revellers in swing-boats and merry-go-rounds, for this village celebrated its annual fair. Dick found a fine old inn here, mellowed with three hundred years of hospitality, and a landlord whose appearance was in harmony with his house. After dinner he went to the door and surveyed the street. The fair was at its height. Twilight had come, but the street blazed with the flickering lights of paraffin torches. The drone of the steam organ of the merry-go-round was mixed with the hoarse voices of the proprietors of cocoa-nut stands, the shouts of country lads, and the screams of girls in the swing-boats. In an open space

opposite the inn a man on a stage informed people that a circus performance was about to commence. Hard by the superior attractions of a fat woman and a living skeleton were offered.

"Lively, isn't it?" remarked the landlord, joining him at the door.

"Yes," said Dick. "I think I shall go and have a shy at a cocoa-nut. By the way, what does 'Billings's entire' mean on the sign under the Battle Axes?"

"Oh," said the landlord, "this here's a brewers' house."

"What is that?"

"A many don't know," replied the landlord, enjoying the boy's ignorance of the mysterious sign. "And you've never heard of Billings's? Well, to be sure!" He proceeded to explain that these great brewers owned a hundred and twenty houses — this being one of them — and that he was himself only a caretaker. Dick was deeply disappointed, the glory of the old inn departed; he went off to throw at cocoa-nuts in disgust.

By and by he found himself inside the circus tent. A band of three brass instruments produced sounds in comparison with which those of the steam organ were soothing; the air was stifling; the smell of dead trodden grass was mixed with that of oil lamps; vacuous laughter greeted the witticisms of a clown in the ring; a man in a frock-coat announced the appearance of Linda, the tight-rope walker. Dick

thought he had seen nothing before so melancholy. Linda was a woman of five-and-twenty; she had probably been good-looking, but her face was hard and worn; there was no trace of a smile on it as she walked across the stretched rope; she made no response to the applause; she had been doing the same thing during the whole afternoon; she had done it week after week and month after month. She might once have been ambitious of pleasing a more imposing audience, and now cared little for the applause she won from village lads: she looked hopelessly weary and disappointed.

Dick was on the point of quitting the tent when the man in the frock-coat announced that the marvellous child, Connie, the renowned equestrienne, would appear.

The sad woman withdrew: there was a flourish of trumpets, and a girl of twelve or thirteen entered on a piebald pony. Her face was radiant, her dark eyes flashed. She was so handsome that the tawdry finery in which she was dressed looked picturesque. She nodded to the audience familiarly, and acknowledged their applause with gratified smiles. Then she went through her performance, standing on one leg on the ambling pony's back, flying through a hoop, jumping to the ground and springing again to her seat with much skill. When she had finished she again bowed. She did more, she made a witticism at the expense of the policeman at the tent-door; she outraged the feelings of the assistant

overseer by kissing her hand to him (he had come in, not for amusement, but as a solemn parochial duty to see that the performance was respectably conducted); she caught Dick's eye and she winked at him. Loud shouts of approval terminated her performance.

Dick left the tent and walked through the noisy street sadder than when he had entered. In a few years, he thought, this child will be hopeless as that woman. His was the time of sentiment. He pictured her evil surroundings, and longed to see her removed from them. He had taken a sudden and violent dislike to the person who appeared to be the proprietor. He took another turn at the cocoanuts, fixing on one of them to represent this individual, and did not leave the stand, where his extravagance was watched by an interested little crowd, until he had felled his enemy. Returning, he again passed the circus: the commencement of a fresh performance was being proclaimed. The thought of the dreariness of its repetition made him curious to see how the actors would behave, and he re-entered. The audience was smaller, the brass instruments louder, — for the band was in liquor, — the air more stifling, the rope-walker sadder than before; but Connie came in as radiant as ever. She went through the same postures, smiled the same smiles, and seemed no less flattered by the applause which greeted her. She recognised Dick again with a look of triumph. She believed that he had come

back to look at her; she had made a conquest. She was a child in years, but no child in other respects.

Half an hour after, when the last performance was over, an unpleasant episode took place behind the scenes. Connie was going to the van where she slept, when the man in the frock-coat came up to her. The girl looked half afraid, half angry.

"Come, Connie, my dear," said the man, "let's have no more stand-offishness. Come, let's be friends, my beauty." He put his arm round her waist and attempted to kiss her.

Connie flung an ugly oath at him and ran frantically to the sleeping-quarters of the tight-rope dancer; when she was safe within she bolted the door. It was dark, and the other girl was nearly asleep. Connie lay down beside her and made a plan.

By degrees the village grew silent; the drone of the steam organ had ceased; the drunken rustics had sung their last chorus; the sounds of the summer night were audible again. Dick lay awake thinking of the circus child. The scent of the country found its way through the open window. Life was very beautiful, though a new feeling of its sadness had touched him. But nothing was really wrong with the world yet. Sleep soon came to him from over the fields, disguised in the wandering song of a brook.

But while he was asleep, the child who had troubled his thoughts was up and doing. As soon as everything was quiet, she wrapped a cloak round

her finery and stole through the deserted village street into the open country along the London road. She had made up her mind to run away.

Against the showers of spring, which are admittedly good for the land, the civilised world is accustomed to hoist umbrellas. The world treats the enthusiasm of youth, without which life would soon dry to barrenness, in much the same way. Probably the reason may be found in the fact that both the showers and the enthusiasm are undiscriminating — pouring alike on the shy primrose and the caustic old bachelor. Dick had just now abundant store of sympathy and enthusiasm for indiscriminate diffusion. He was led into some absurdities and encountered some ridicule in consequence. The day after his visit to the circus was memorable to him in this respect: it began with a misplaced sympathy which made him the unhappy owner of a very stubborn donkey. About an hour after starting, as he was passing through a scattered hamlet on the edge of a common, he saw this donkey; it was heavily laden with brushwood, and its master was belabouring its hind legs with many blows. Between his whacks, which were delivered in an unconscious fashion, the man, as he passed, exchanged greetings with village acquaintances. Pity for the donkey, wrath against the man, urged Dick to intercession and strong words. He was forgetful that, whatever may be the modern sentiment about horses and wives, every Englishman has a perfect right to beat a donkey. The donkey

himself seems to recognise this as part of his condition, nor particularly to object, otherwise would he prefer to go his own pace with stripes rather than his master's idea of pace without them?

The man eyed Dick composedly, repeating his words with a fine imitation of his manner, which brought simultaneous grins to the countenances of five friends who had come up to see the row. Explosive laughter followed, and the proprietor of the animal further asserted his rights by a fresh attack. He had not calculated on dealing with such a hot-headed youth. Much as Dick resented the treatment of the ass, he still more objected to the man's manner to himself.

"Oh!" said he, "you're cheeky, are you, as well as brutal? See how you like it yourself." And he treated him to half-a-dozen blows of his stick, which produced howls.

The man made no attempt at resistance; he saw that his enemy was too strong for him, and, having wriggled himself free, placed the shadow of the law between them, calling upon his five friends and others who had appeared, to bear witness to this shameful outrage. One of them indignantly asked the company, Whose donkey it was, he should like to know, if not Joe Larkins's? Joe Larkins's donkey, yes, and what right had any one to interfere between a poor honest man and his moke?

The law of conservation of energy, which shows us how the failure of a missile to rebound from a

mark becomes converted into heat, illustrates how it happened that Dick's blows, though not returned, became converted into bad language in Mr. Larkins's mouth. The energy which failed to raise his arm loosened his tongue, and, if any well-equipped man of science had been present, he might have demonstrated the principle referred to by showing that the heat of the language was an exact equivalent to the motion of the stick which his back had retarded. During this abuse Dick walked away, but he was followed by the whole party. They did not intend to let him off so cheaply. The law was again mentioned, his name demanded. One, wise in his village, advised him to settle out of court, remarking that Joe was a forgiving creetur, and might square for ten bob. A grinning boy informed him that the moke would have to pay for it when he was gone; trust Joe, he would lick that moke for bringing this trouble upon him. And this last shot told. How was he to know that the man would not continue to ill-treat the poor animal? He would not offer him money to be humane. What could he do? Another suggestion from the crowd resulted in a bargain.

"Perhaps you'd like to buy the little donkey," said the voice; "just suit you, sir, he'd carry your weight beautiful."

Dick showed a disposition to treat, and Mr. Larkins, being in pecuniary difficulties, and seeing a possibility of doing well for himself, allowed ex-

pediency to triumph over indignation, and commenced to speak the praises of his ass — its likeliness, its speed, its willingness, except on rare occasions when the stick was necessary, and the donkey knew it. Shortly afterwards a bargain was concluded, and Joe Larkins returned with his friends to the village inn with four sovereigns, while Dick, leading the donkey and somewhat embarrassed by his possession, departed slowly over the hill.

At first he thought he would make arrangements at the next railway station for sending the donkey to Farinder for Nan's use, but before they had travelled far together he decided that they must part, that he must sell him at a sacrifice to the first comer — give him away if need be. The stubbornness of the ass was such that Dick was guilty of the inconsistency of himself adopting the treatment which he had condemned in Mr. Larkins. At noon he left his friend to graze by the roadside, while he went into a field adjoining, and sat down to reflect under a hay rick. Before long he heard sounds of laughter, and a waggon appeared on the road. Perched up beside the driver he saw Connie. She had slept on the previous night in a shed, and was now taking advantage of a lift for a few miles of the road. Looking over the hedge she saw and recognised Dick, and immediately said good-bye to the waggoner, and jumped down.

"Hullo!" she said, taking a seat beside him on the loose hay, "I never thought as I should see you again."

"Well!" said Dick, much amazed. "What on earth brings you here?"

"You ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies," said Connie. "P'r'aps I'm on the spree, like yourself. Well, what did you think of our show last night?"

"Very poor," he replied, looking at her with much amusement.

"Oh, indeed! Well, why did you come in twice? You couldn't keep away. Did you come to look at me?"

Dick found it difficult to explain.

"That was it," she continued. "Well, I liked the looks of *you*."

"Where are you going to?" asked Dick.

"'Where are you going my pretty maid?' I'm going to London, sir, she said. And now you'd ought to ask: 'May I come with you my pretty maid?'"

The boy could not keep pace with her.

"Well, now, it's my turn to ask questions," she continued. "Where are you going to?"

"Oh! I'm going to London too, at least I'm going to walk to Riplow to-day, and then on by train."

"I'm running away," said Connie more seriously.

"Running away? Who from?"

"From our show. My! won't they be in a fix to-night. They'll have to give up the performance." She laughed exultingly when she thought of it.

"Why?" asked Dick, much interested. "Tell me about it."

"You won't go back on me. You'll stand in as my pal?"

"Yes, I will."

Connie looked at him critically, to assure herself of his good faith. "I think you're straight," she said. "Well, me and the boss fell out last night; he treated me shameful. I hate him. I can't abide him, the viper." Her eyes blazed with indignation.

"Did he hit you?"

"No; he was always hanging about trying to kiss me. I wouldn't have minded if I'd liked him, but —oh! he's a devil."

"My poor child," said Dick, from the magnificent pinnacle of his eighteen years.

"Oh, child indeed!" exclaimed Connie. "P'r'aps I'm not such a kid as you think. I'm nearly thirteen, and I daresay I could teach you a thing or two."

"Well," said Dick, "if that blackguard bothered you, you were quite right in bolting. But have you friends to go to, or anything?"

"I shall stay with a lady friend to-night at Riplow," she answered, lying. "Then I shall go on to relations in London."

"Have you any money?"

"No. Are you going to lend me some?"

"Yes, if you like. And how are you going to get to Riplow? Walk?"

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"Yes. We might as well go along together if you'll have me. Will you?"

Dick looked at her curiously; she was arrayed in her professional garments, but they were partly hidden by a cloak. Like most people of his age, he was sensitive as to appearance, though he fancied he was indifferent about it, and the thought of being seen in such strange company was dismaying. However, he reflected that he was likely to meet no one for whose opinion he could care on these country roads, and the child was in need of a protector.

"Oh, yes; come along. We'll go together," he said, cheerfully.

Connie perceived that he had hesitated. "You're real kind," she said, "and you're a toff."

"What's a toff?"

"Oh," she laughed, "a swell, one as fancies himself. My aunt! if some of your folks was to meet you travelling with me, wouldn't you get talked to, just."

"I don't mind what any one thinks about me," said Dick. "I do what pleases me. Do you think, though, you'll be able to walk all the way to Riplow? It's thirteen miles. By the way, I've a donkey here. I know you can ride. We might make use of him, he could carry you part of the way."

"You don't tell me as that moke's yours," cried Connie. "Well, you're a comic!"

It was curious that immediately Connie was on the donkey's back his speed became all that could be

desired. Perhaps her training in the circus had given her a subtle influence with animals, perhaps the ass was proud of carrying a lady; at all events the stick was no longer needed. Dick walked at the side and continued to converse with his new friend. She needed no inducement to talk; she was communicative about herself, but mixed fiction freely with her facts. He gathered that her mother was French, and belonged to a circus, and had been deserted by her father, whom she believed to be of high rank. She had been taken care of by another circus lady, and she had begun soon to take part in the performance herself. She was reticent about the relatives in London to whom she was going, but she seemed quite happy, and laughed at Dick's solicitude for her safety.

"You bet I know how to look after myself," she said. "I know my way about."

After they had been travelling about an hour, they halted at a village for refreshment. The novelty of going to an inn with a gentleman pleased Connie mightily.

"They'll think as we're on our honeymoon," she remarked, as they drew up at the door. "This is about the best lark I ever had."

"You cheeky little beggar," said Dick, "if you don't behave yourself I won't go in with you. Pull that cloak well round you and don't let them see your dress."

The landlord eyed the pair with severity. Dick

was somewhat ashamed: he spoke a word or two of explanation to him aside, and ordered lunch.

"Well," said the landlord, amused and half-incredulous, "there's no knowing what games young gentlemen are up to nowadays. Anyhow, it's no business of mine."

Dick went out to look after the ass. In his absence Connie assumed an air of dignity with the attendant maid. "Could you show me a room," she said magnificently, "where I can wash? We found the roads rather dusty."

She looked very fresh when she came down again. She kept on her cloak but had removed her hat, and her fine black hair fell abundantly over her shoulders.

"Ah," said Dick, "you've been polishing up."

"Yes; do I look nice?"

"Very."

"You admire me, don't you?"

"Oh, you're not bad," he admitted.

"You won't say it, but you know I'm pretty. Prettier than those ladies you know, though they have finer dresses and that."

He was disposed to give her a lecture on vanity, but could only laugh. The meal was a very pleasant one: they were both hungry; the cold beef and ale were excellent; tea was provided for Connie.

"Fancy you and me mealing here together like two old friends," said she. "I wish we were going on together for days and days. Well, now I think of it, I don't even know your name. I told you mine."

"Malory," he informed her.

"And what's your Christian name?"

"Dick."

"I suppose you'd be cross if I was to call you Dick."

"No. I shouldn't particularly mind. We shall probably never see each other again after to-day."

Connie looked almost sad. "No," she assented, "and I don't suppose that troubles you. Well, let's be jolly."

She had a few shillings in her pocket: before leaving the inn, relying upon Dick to replenish her funds, she magnificently bestowed half-a-crown on the girl who had shown her to her room. Dick brought round the donkey, and, after Connie had taken her seat and waved adieu to the landlord, the travellers set out on the journey to Riplow, which was about nine miles distant.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE OBTRUSION OF A DONKEY UPON A FASHIONABLE PARTY.

ONE Sir Compton Dando, when an over-due death brought him fortune in money, was commended by his friends for his wisdom in building a new house on the banks of the Thames, instead of enlarging the inaccessible and dilapitated family mansion in Cornwall. He was considered fortunate in his site, which sloped pleasantly to the river, in its position some three-quarters of an hour by rail from London, and in the good taste and skill of his architect. When it was suggested that he had perhaps been his own architect, he allowed it to be understood that Mr. Quoin was not unindebted to him for the design, though in the matter of staircases and chimneys and so forth, that gentleman had had a free hand. Sir Compton shared the national sentiment in favour of the comfortable beauty of the river Thames, with its pleasant breadths of sunny water, happily flowing among the lands of the prosperous and by the cottages of the contented, — England's beauty, as it were, mirroring her prosperity.

There had been picnicing on the river. Disem-

barking at the landing-stage above Riplow, the neighbouring town, the party presented a pretty picture of gracefully-attired men and women. Indeed, men have at such times an opportunity not often afforded to them of indulgence in colour, and of returning to the original superior brilliancy of male plumage.

Tom Longfield was assisting Miss Chillington to land. When she took his hand in stepping from the boat her movements endowed him with a sudden grace not his own. Of her beauty there could be no doubt, though many people considered it was marred by an expression of self-possession, unbecoming in a girl so young. It occurred to Tom that if the landing-place had been muddy, she was the sort of woman for whom one would have felt impelled to throw down his boating coat of many colours, as Raleigh his velvet mantle, and that she would have stepped on it as if she were doing him an honour. Her whole appearance gave the impression of careful study, even in the simple boating dress which she now wore. She was a girl of seventeen, with the confident air of a woman of the world.

A bend in the river and a sudden view of Riplow pulled her up, and gave Tom another opportunity of admiring her figure as she stood with elbow and hand lifted to shade her eyes. Miss Askew, passing at the moment with Archdeacon Pomfret, observed her, and wondered to her companion whether Miss Chillington knew what a pretty foreground she

made to a picture. (It should be chronicled that she was the daughter of Mr. Justice Askew, who was at the time of her birth a Crown Council terrible in cross-examination, and that her younger sister, who was born after he became a judge, was more tolerant to human weaknesses.) Perhaps if Miss Chillington had known how approvingly the Archdeacon had looked at her as he passed she would not have made fun of his appearance to her companion.

"If it is true that your profession and the Archdeacon's are the most popular with women," she said, "you certainly have an advantage over your rivals in your uniform, but you miss the opportunity of wearing it in private life, for indeed you cannot wear your sword on the river, Mr. Longfield. Well, I really think the Church should show more discrimination — it should no more select an archdeacon without calves than a precentor without a voice. Look, now, at our poor attenuated friend in front."

Tom laughed as he looked, but not freely. The remark did not come up to his standard of the truly feminine; for it is curious how the very men who will speak most lightly of women to each other are unusually exacting in their demands for false refinement in the ladies of their own circle. Tom had still an honest respect for women, but he had caught many of the modes of thought of some of his less sturdy associates, and to his thinking there was a shadow of indelicacy in her admission of the fact that she was aware of the existence of the human

calf. However he remembered as an excuse for her that she was Irish, and the next minute he was her worshipper again. He was conscious of a special effort to show himself in her presence to his best advantage, and also of a feeling of dissatisfaction with the result. He felt some undefinable superiority in her, which certainly was not asserted in her frank speech and laugh, and was probably negative and traceable to a failure on her part to recognise the established attitude of man, and play becomingly to his part of referee.

A bend of the river showed the approach of unusual figures — Dick, Connie, and the donkey. The evening being warm, Connie had taken off her cloak; she was mounted; her spangles sparkled in the sunshine. Dick walked at the side with the bridle on his arm. He had not calculated on meeting a fashionable party on the towing-path.

"My aunt!" cried Connie, "here's a joke. Here comes a lot of swells."

Dick felt very uncomfortable; he was inclined to turn back, but it was too late.

"Just put that cloak on, Connie," he said. "Fasten it up tight. What idiots we must look!"

Connie did as she was desired, but with a protest. "Oh! if you're ashamed of me," she said, "you can hide till they're past. Why don't you go and hide in them bulrushes, like young Moses?"

"What an extraordinary couple!" exclaimed Miss Chillington to Tom as they drew closer. "The man

looks like a gentleman, but do look at the girl on the donkey."

A minute later Tom Longfield and Dick had recognized each other. It would be difficult to say which of them was the more confused — probably Tom. He was the elder; nothing smote him harder than a ridiculous position; Miss Chillington was at his side, the rest of the party coming up; he was utterly ashamed for his friend's absurdity. On the other hand, directly the position became apparent to them, both Miss Chillington and Connie enjoyed it. Connie's inborn spirit of devilry became active. Miss Chillington found the scene comic, and she took a mischievous delight in Tom's uneasiness. She had little reverence herself for respectability, and to see a young Englishman ruthlessly torn from his goddess made her merry.

"Well, Tom!" said Dick, taking off his cap and laughing shyly.

"Well, Dick, you're a funny chap."

Dick was inclined to go on, and Tom would no doubt have allowed him to do so, but Miss Chillington begged to be introduced.

"This is my friend, Mr. Malory, Miss Chillington," he said, with an effort; "how he comes here and what he is doing he must tell us for himself."

"I am on my way to London," said Dick. "I thought I'd walk as the weather was fine." The explanation was incomplete. Miss Chillington scrutinised him with amusement. Connie joined in the

conversation. "Yes, we're going to London," she observed, with a wicked look at Tom.

Others of the party passed and criticised the group; and there were quiet smiles, for which Tom was on the look-out, and returned, to show that he was on the side of the smiles, not on the donkeys.

"I suppose," continued Connie, "it's me that puzzles you. You think it's a funny thing to meet your friend with one of my sort. Well, he's been very good to me. I say, Dick, I'm making the gent uncomfortable. I think I'd better ride on, and you can follow when you've had your talk."

Dick saw that it was useless to attempt explanation, that he must accept the situation; and he was irritated at Tom's supercilious and superior manner. It made him aggressive.

"Not a bit of it, Connie," he said; "I'll come with you." He was fortified and rewarded by an approving look from Miss Chillington. Connie had also been influenced by that young lady. She had been inclined to be very audacious; she had even contemplated startling the party by standing on the donkey's back when the time came to move on, and putting him through a few circus evolutions, but Miss Chillington's presence subdued her, and as Dick had not been ashamed of her, she desired to show her gratitude.

"We met coming along," she remarked. "I was tired, and he gave me a ride on his moke."

"You don't mean to say that donkey is yours!"

cried Tom. "Are you going to ride him into London?"

"Yes, I think it is very probable," Dick replied, uncompromisingly.

Tom pictured him on the donkey entering London from the west, and coming down the Row towards evening. Miss Chillington stroked the donkey's ears affectionately, and gave Connie a friendly smile.

"I'm afraid your countrymen would never stand it, Mr. Malory," she said; "the masses would rise. The donkey has a peculiar effect upon their imaginations. In Ireland we understand him better."

"Oh, don't pet him," cried Dick; "he doesn't deserve it; he's the most ungrateful beast you ever heard of. He's for sale, Tom."

Miss Chillington entered into conversation with Connie, and speedily learned something of her story. Tom perceived her attitude, and became happier. He spoke to his friend with some of his old cordiality; he said he had been so surprised that he had forgotten to say how glad he was to see him again.

"And where do you stay to-night?" he asked. "Riplow? Well, I'll come down to your inn — the Swan's the best — after dinner and have a talk. I'm awfully glad to see you. I'm off to Gib, you know, next week, and there's heaps to talk over."

"Ah, not at all," joined in Miss Chillington. "Mr. Malory must not go to an inn — he must come

up to Somerford, of course. Blaise!" she called to her cousin, young Dando, who was behind, and came forward fixing an eyeglass, "this is Mr. Malory, an old friend of Mr. Longfield's, who is tramping across the country and just met us by accident. You must persuade him to spend the night at Somerford instead of going to an inn."

"Of course! take no refusal," said the Lieutenant, nodding.

Dick hesitated. "It is very good of you, but I am on foot, you know, and quite unpresentable."

"Easily fit you up," said Blaise, laughing, and looking at Connie; "won't we, Longfield? And what about"—he was going to add "the lady," but he caught his cousin's eye and refrained.

"The easiest thing in the world," Tom replied.

"Dinner at half-past seven," added Mr. Dando. "We shall expect you."

"Of course—it is settled," said Miss Chillington; and Dick had accepted the invitation before he had time to hesitate further.

"I'll go on to Riplow and put up the donkey," he said to Tom, "and come up in time to dress for dinner. Connie, we must be going."

"I like your friend immensely," Miss Chillington remarked to Tom after they had parted. "I shall make him tell me all about his adventures to-night. What a strange child that was—and so beautiful."

"She had good eyes," Tom admitted. "Well, Dick always was a funny fellow."

"That lady's just the finest-looking piece I ever set eyes on," said Connie to Dick. "And, my! wasn't she fixed up smart. Now, if I was got up like her—but it's no use wishing. And you wasn't ashamed of me."

"No," Dick replied, absently.

"But you'll forget me when you get up among your grand friends. I expect you'll fall in love with that young lady, and you'll never think of me again, I expect."

"Of course I shall, and all the fun we had to-day."

"You're not thinking about me at all," she said, in a vexed tone; "I see it by your look. You're thinking about that lady."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### MISS CHILLINGTON.

THE evening sun filled the drawing-room with mellow light, and Sir Compton Dando beamed on his assembled guests. Man loves to have a *rôle:* his was that of host; he was insignificant in any other. When he left his house he left his power behind him, and he knew it, — in a bathing-machine he hardly felt like a baronet. But as a host he was great. It was he, not the sun of the south, who received credit for the vintage; he unconsciously felt a joint-authorship with the Creator in the view which he gave his guests from the windows, and a joint-responsibility for the weather while they were with him.

On this occasion he felt himself specially fortunate in his guests. The House of Lords was represented by the Earl of Eigg; the lower house by Mr. Frampton Cotterell, the member for Riplow; the Church by Archdeacon Pomfret; the law by the ladies of Mr. Justice Askew; diplomatic circles by Mr. Chillington; letters by Mr. Norton Tristram; and the army numerously. Business was also there, "in two places" — to borrow a figure from the auc-

tioneer, — in the person of the member for Riplow · and that of a nephew of his own, who, having failed to gain admission to the army, had recently entered on a commercial career. The mother of this gentleman had not altogether approved the choice, but had grown reconciled to it on the reflection that it was not an uncommon thing now for gentlemen of good family to go into business, and that a large fortune in the course of a few years was to be the certain and meet reward of the sacrifice.

While Sir Compton reviewed his assembling forces and arranged the order of march to dinner — Lady Dando having previously worked out this arrangement through all its permutations and combinations, — Tom Longfield brought Dick to his hostess, who was talking to the Archdeacon.

"Ah, Mr. Longfield," she said, "I was just telling Archdeacon Pomfret that the Bishop ought to be very much obliged to me for persuading him to pay us a visit, the river air has done him so much good already; he works so hard, you know. What a pity you have to go to-morrow — but I really would not allow you to stay. I know what a mother's heart is, and of course your own people are the first claimants for the next week or two. It is a great comfort to have dear Blaise with us before he leaves, poor boy, though he says he must go to town next week to make arrangements." Tom presented Dick. "Oh, I am so pleased to make your acquaintance, Mr. Malory. What an original idea of yours to come

through the country on a donkey! It is quite refreshing to meet people who do original things. Mr. Longfield, you know Miss Brosely, don't you? Mr. Malory, let me introduce you to Miss Beatrix Askew."

When Miss Chillington came into the room she became the centre of a little group of men, and even charitable women do not care to see one of their number engaging more than her share of attention. She provoked the criticism of two ladies who were looking at an album of engravings in the shelter of a recess.

"She is unmistakably handsome," admitted the first.

"Yes, she is certainly good-looking, but it is a style I don't admire. She looks so conscious of her beauty, as though she demanded admiration."

"Well, she gets quite as much as she deserves. Why, she's not eighteen. There are curious things said about her, my dear. .If all accounts are true she is very fast."

"Nothing serious, I hope."

"Oh! not that I know of, but they say she has no becoming feminine reserve. She talks to men as if she were a man herself, or perhaps more as men talk to women. My husband, who like the rest of them admires her, says she assumes the offensive instead of the defensive."

"You know there are all sorts of stories about her wilfulness. One, of her being out hunting in Ire-

land when the fox crossed a flooded river, and one of the riders who followed had his horse drowned. She followed in spite of her father's orders. They say he threatened to horsewhip her if she was not drowned, and it is believed he afterwards did so."

"Oh, the best story I have heard of her," said the first lady, "is about her conduct to little Mr. Shipton, the curate who was here last week. Jim told me to take it for what it was worth."

"Whatever did she do to poor Mr. Shipton? Do tell me."

"The story is that she was walking by the river with Mr. Shipton, and her little terrier contrived to fall in, and was nearly drowned. Mr. Shipton heroically went to the rescue, and came out holding the wretched dog, and looking a woful sight with his long coat tails clinging round his legs. One of the gentlemen was walking near and saw it all. And what do you suppose Miss Chillington did? — ran impetuously up to him crying, 'You dear, brave, little creature,' and gave him a kiss."

"Oh, it is too absurd," said the other lady, laughing; "they must have invented it in the smoking-room."

"Not at all, my dear. I believe it is quite true. Only just fancy what Mr. Shipton must have felt. You know he is engaged to that tall, plain girl with freckles — the girl we saw in church. He must have felt like a criminal with the secret of that kiss on his cheek."

"Well, I could believe a good deal of her, but hardly her kissing Mr. Shipton. We might ask him if the dog really fell in, or if she threw it in to test his devotion, as De Lorge's lady threw the glove to the lions."

"Or if he felt inclined to throw the dog in her face, as De Lorge threw the glove, or, being a Christian, to be forgiving and turn the other cheek."

"Very good, but just a little profane, dear, and you know my feelings about the Bible. Ah! Major Anderson, have you had much difficulty in finding me? It would have served us right for hiding away if we had been left behind and sent to bed without dinner, like naughty children."

Dick was not feeling very happy; the subjects of conversation were entirely strange to him; of the theatres, the doings of the fashionable world, the musical and artistic gossip, the young men's allusions to yachting, or race-horses, or polo matches, he knew nothing: he was envious of the men who were laughing with Miss Chillington. At dinner he was entrusted with the care of the younger Miss Askew, and had the wife of the Archdeacon for his other neighbour. Opposite were Miss Chillington and Norton Tristram, and this couple so engrossed his attention that he failed somewhat in his duty to his mess-mate.

"What a recluse you must be!" said she, after offering various conversational headings which remained unamplified; "you have never seen Mr.

Irving act, and not read anything about Buddhism. Of course that sort of reading is dangerous. I suppose, like every thoughtful man to-day, you have been through a phase of religious doubts. It is hard now-a-days to escape."

"No," said Dick, apologetically, "I'm afraid I have not had them yet. Are you bound to have them?"

"How can you be so flippant?"

Religious doubts to the young lady were more sacred than faith itself. To Dick there was something very comical in the subject as a topic for conversation at dinner, but he had seen little of the world.

"You cannot accept everything?" she asked.

"I do," he answered; "I'm like the schoolmaster in our village; he can't read very long words himself, and when a boy stumbles at one he tells him 'to call it summat and go on.' I do that with puzzles."

"Then you're very cowardly. You know what Tennyson says about 'honest doubt?'"

Dick hardly heard, he was watching Miss Chillington, whose eyes grew brighter as she spoke to the poet about her country.

"Oh, yes," he replied. "I remember. It's very pretty."

"Pretty! surely that's hardly the word. Well, I envy you your peace of mind. Thank you, a paté."

The gentleman sitting next her now engaged her in conversation on the coming regatta at Henley, and

Dick was left at leisure to watch Miss Chillington. He thought she looked even more beautiful than when he had first seen her; her colour was brighter, her forehead and the golden brown hair which shadowed it had before been hidden by her hat. Her figure was as beautiful as her face; but where other ladies were prodigal in their poverty she was exclusive in her wealth, and wore a dress which showed but little of her neck. She gave the impression of extreme finish in detail, of fulfilling in her person Mr. Ruskin's demand for architecture — that it should be as carefully executed where hidden as where seen, the column capital as lovingly completed where it was turned to the wall as to the congregation.

Tristram, her companion, was at first disappointing to Dick, who had read a volume of his poems which he had found among Humphry's miscellaneous collection of books. He had formed an ideal conception of a poet's appearance, and to this Tristram did not conform; he was like other men — without suggestion of romance: his countenance seemed rather that of the world-weary man of pleasure than of the inspired singer.

He and Miss Chillington were on excellent terms. Dick heard her reproach him for his ignorance of Ireland, speaking with a slight Irish intonation which was to the poet one of her many charms.

"We don't want to be part of the English Empire which you think such an honour," she was saying;

"we cannot, and will not, forget the past; but if you do consider Ireland part of your country, why do you allow the peasantry to be starved out of it and go to America in thousands every year?"

"Oh, I wish you would not say 'you,'" replied Tristram; "say England."

"Yes, I do say 'you,'" she continued, "because it is just such men as you — a poet who loves freedom and justice, and is outside the interest of any class — who should be our champion. Ah! if only we had a great poet of our own. It is a great thing to fight for your country: it is still greater to give your country something to make it worth fighting for. An English soldier has to fight for England's wealth: the army is in the service of trade. It is the artist and the poet who keep its ideals fresh. A poet is what we want, to express our own ideal for us. We have no voice to speak our hopes and our wrongs. We are not ready for our Mazzini; we should not understand him." Tristram looked at her with great approval, but it was the speaker, not the subject, that interested him. "A poet would find Irish hearts less difficult to stir than English," she continued.

"Perhaps so," said Tristram. "I have been accustomed, in my darkness, to look upon the difference between the English and Irish people as similar to that between a man who has had too much to eat and one who has had too much to drink."

Miss Chillington laughed. "It is clear that patriot-

ism is no longer a necessary part of the equipment of a poet. Well, you will come and see for yourself, will you not? My father will be with us in the autumn for a few weeks, and you must come then. If you are disappointed in the people we can give you scenery."

Mrs. Pomfret became a trickling tributary to their conversation, and spoke of mountains: "They give us such a sense of mystery and sublimity, and of the smallness of our own life."

"A recent president of the Alpine Club quotes an old writer who justified the Creator for making mountains — which the ancient world regarded as a nuisance — solely on the ground that they harboured fur-yielding animals," observed Tristram.

The younger Miss Askew remarked that though fur was indispensible, *she* considered that the mountains had a yet higher use. She forgot the world when she was in the presence of the mountains.

"The longer I live," said Mrs. Pomfret, "the more I feel the truth of the saying that 'God made the country and man made the town.'"

"Don't you think an exception might be made in favour of cathedral towns?" said Miss Chillington, slyly.

"I alluded to manufacturing towns, my dear," replied Mrs. Pomfret, with dignity.

Miss Chillington turned to her neighbour on the right — the business nephew of the house of Dando.

"I suppose you are quite a learned man of busi-

ness now, Sam," said she, "and know all about stocks and dividends and things."

Sam remembered the nature of the official duties of which he had become master. He spoke solemnly. "There is a fearful amount to learn, you know, and I can't say I have it all at my fingers' ends, you know, but I am told these sort of things come all at once to you."

Mr. Tristram asked if this happy result were obtained by a laying on of hands by the senior partner, or some such sacramental process.

"We shall hear of you waking up some morning and finding yourself rich," said Miss Chillington. "After your day's business it must be pleasant to have your evenings to yourself. Now, tell me, do you read much?"

"Well, no"—

"And why so?"

"Well, the fact is, I have so little time," said Sam, "and there are so few good books, you know."

"Oh, Sam," said his cousin, laughing gaily, "you are too severe — too severe altogether. Now, isn't he, Mr. Tristram?"

Lady Dando exchanged glances with the Countess of Eigg and rose. A warm evening and a rosy north-west attracted many of the ladies from the drawing-room to the garden. The men gathered closer round their host, who gave biographical hints about the wine.

Dick's shyness was gone; he desired to talk. He

asked his neighbour, a large, vacant-looking soldier, whom he had heard making allusion to Egypt, what he thought of the Pyramids. "Oh, they're damn rum things, you know; damn rum things," replied the Major, whereupon the conversation came to a close. Tom Longfield came round and took a chair beside Dick.

"And seriously," he asked, "you have decided on being a sculptor? Is it good enough?"

"Oh, I suppose so; you must be something," Dick replied.

"I never understood how a sculptor earned his living," grumbled Tom. "Making monuments, or how? Well, I'm sorry, old fellow."

"Oh, nonsense," said Dick, impatiently. "If you're good enough you can serve your country as well by art as by fighting." He was recalling what Miss Chillington had said.

"I should like to know how."

"Well, you can stir the heroism in your country and celebrate its heroes, for instance."

"Oh, I know, those statues in St. Paul's," said Tom; "Victory presenting the naked admirals with wreaths — ridiculous things. I don't believe you'll stick to it either. I say, they're on the move; we'll have a talk outside. I want to hear more about the jackass."

The garden was beautiful under darkening skies and the first stars. In addition to the light of heaven, Sir Compton Dando provided artificial illu-

mination to cheer his guests. In a glow of lime-light quartettes were being sung. The faces of the guests at Somerford were beautiful in their contentment. If what is known as a composite photograph could have been taken, the expression of the resultant face would have been one of gently smiling, kindly benevolence. Nay, if the representative were clothed in white robes, it might even have portrayed Charity — Charity well born, that is, and seen at a moment when she was thinking more of what she had done than of what remained to do. Dick, perhaps, should have been excluded from the portrait, for he was restless. After a talk with Tom Longfield he wandered about the garden alone, the possessor of some new sensations. Miss Chillington had fired his thoughts. His boyish enthusiasm for the heroic, which had contented itself with the imaginary or with the past, now turned to the actual and the present: the heroic was still to be achieved — he himself might achieve it. The few words he had heard her say to Tristram about the service of one's country by art inspired him with a longing to enter on such service; her own ardent love of her country showed to him patriotism as a great ideal within reach; it showed him how England should be loved; he could have wished, however, that it might have been his to attempt this by poetry rather than sculpture; sculpture was too cold for his present mood. Miss Chillington herself seemed to him more beautiful, more admirable, than the unknown perfect

maidens of his boyish dreams, and also as far removed from him — a princess beyond reach. It would be the supremest joy conceivable to do such work as might rank him in her eyes among those who deserve well of their country. And the cause of her country too! he would study that — it must be noble since she was devoted to it. Tristram was unworthy of himself as a poet, and of her appeal to him, in having been uninspired by her words. Might not he himself find the subject for his first great work in sculpture in that cause? Erin parting with her children, who were about to be driven into exile, or England, nobly generous, giving her back her children.

He subsequently mentioned the subject casually in one of his letters to Humphry, and Humphry approved it, with the comment that a work which claimed to represent the national sentiment would be incomplete without the presence of the domestic pet of the national hearth; he thought that if the statue of Erin should be equestrian or rather pig-mounted it might take rank as a companion work of art with Europa and the Bull, or Una and the Lion.

## CHAPTER IX.

### CONNIE.

THE transition from youthful sentiment to experience of the world of men is like that from the country to the town, where half-finished streets project into half-mutilated meadows: we are not tempted to linger. Beyond, in the city's dark mystery, lies another world of romance for such as are fearless in beholding and generous in judgment; beyond again, for these, paths outward to the mountains and the sea.

The process of disillusion is gradual. Like the ruddy complexion from the cheek of youth, the first bloom of romance quits the soul; neither is wept for; each is remembered with kind laughter.

During the first few years of his life in London Dick's thoughts were less for his art than for the problems of life and the condition of his fellow-creatures. He gave much attention to the doleful pastime of reform; he startled Humphry in a letter by informing him that he had joined a society called the Asynepangelists, — the "no-compromisers" he translated it; he worked in the East End; he showed a tendency to Socialistic principles. He

caused his uncle much amusement. "These young souls, when they begin to boil and the lids come off, are very interesting," he commented; "there is nothing so comical as the earnestness of the young, and nothing so sad as the indifference of the old."

The progress of disenchantment was steady; the work of reform did not progress; the society of Asynepangelists tottered; many of its most prominent members withdrew. The Honourable Thomas Molyneux Thynne Culbone, who had dropped the word "honourable" so that he might earn the only real title to it by labouring for his fellow-creatures, resumed his rank; Mr. Tuam, whose conscience had told him that the land should be owned by the nation, and who, having a small property in Ireland, had presented this to the Government of the day, was very glad that the Government had refused to accept it; and young Featherstone, who had been so severe upon the Church, though he had a decanal parent, had taken holy orders. Dick himself had begun to find the work irksome. In his unbounded trust of life he had at first refused to believe that anything could be wrong with the world. When he discovered his mistake he saw the imperfections of the earth as a lover sees the fault or pain of his lady. He did not shut his eyes, nor avoid the dark places; he felt that while these were unlightened he could not enjoy the beauty of the sunshine elsewhere; that it was service, not appreciation, which was first demanded. Now, with further acquaintance, the darkness deepened, the

service looked less hopeful; he was impatient and disappointed.

Tristram, the poet, introduced him to his own circle of friends — artists, literary men, and others, — men very different from the Asynepangelists. They went, indeed, to the opposite extreme, allowing their conduct to be hampered by no restrictions whatever; and Dick found the change pleasant. His new companions met with the disapproval of two men among his former associates whose true friendship he had gained. One of these was a working man named Strong, a Socialist with brains; the other, his fellow-lodger, one Clovis Cloudesley Shovel, a simple-minded and lovable creature, with a countenance which would have made the fortune of a comic actor.

Dick's new habits aroused Strong's scorn and awoke Shovel's anxiety, but he took his own way unconcerned by either. And just at the time when his ideas were in a muddle and his path undefined, his old friend Connie danced into his life and shaped it for him.

He had been to the East End to pay a visit to Robert Strong. After leaving him he walked towards the docks near the Tower of London, feeling depressed and unhappy. The gloom of the November evening was thrice gloomy in those dark streets. Where there was any brightness — by tavern or music-hall — it was viler than the gloom; where there was any beauty — a pretty child with happy

smiles for her ragged doll under a lamp, a Scotch mountain song played on a barrel-organ — it was sadder than the prevailing ugliness. He passed sailors with brawling women, clerks — the narrow-chested sons of our commercial prosperity — going home northwards from their warehouses, and some few of their masters, spruce and silk-hatted, stepping westward. There was no greeting, there was no brotherhood here. He was glad to get down near the ships; they revived his spirits; they told of an outlet from this prison; they spoke of far-distant seas and starry nights, and the lap of shoreless waters against the dipping bows. And ships were coming in from the sea, and as they swung in the river to their berths, came the sound of the voices of the sailors as they hauled on the ropes. The memories of childhood touched his heart as he listened.

The condition of the world which he now saw, so different from the world which he had pictured, gave him serious thoughts as he walked homewards. It seemed to him that men had lost faith in each other and in their country and in earth and heaven, so that there was little room for pleasant wayfaring on the unknown road, or great sacrifice for the dear native land: there was no unity of purpose to make men brothers.

Near London Bridge he met Norton Tristram — an unwonted visitor east of St. Paul's.

"Ah, Malory!" he cried, "well met. Now, by your countenance, you've been howking the middens;

'doing good.' Am I not right? and I, where do you think I've been?"

"To Brighton, to get an appetite for dinner."

"No. I have been sitting for two hours with a pious old lady, my great-aunt, who lives in lodgings at Clapham Common."

"This is inconceivable," said Dick.

"It is true. I am to sup to-night with some ladies of the theatrical profession and other merry friends — there is a charming Neapolitan among them, — and it occurred to me that it would give the entertainment a flavour if I spent the afternoon with my aunt. Virtue is my olive before the wine."

Tristram had passed those days of comparative innocence when wickedness had been piquant to him, and now in the days of his dissipation he found a comparative piquancy in innocence; he looked at it artistically. His deliberate seeking after new sensations marked him as one to whom Nature was no longer friendly. She is unindulgent to those who are overcareful about indulging themselves, dooming them to perpetual pursuit, and sending them to ugly places in search of new emotions. The freshness of Dick's nature, his enthusiasm for life, had attracted Tristram, by contrast to his own condition and that of the greater number of his friends. He had recently frequently invited him to his rooms, and had introduced him to his own companions and to a side of life which had many attractions.

"So you still stick to the slums," he remarked.

"Only on the Clapham Common principle," said Dick. "I'm going to the theatre to-night."

. "Not a bit of it, Malory; you go because you haven't yet got over your love for humanity. Now, if I went, I should go to get a few necessary shadows to make my picture of life interesting. I don't care a straw for the poor really. Indeed, I think the lower classes are horrid."

"Yes, shocking," said Dick, ironically.

"It's a good thing you're going to the theatre to-night, my boy; these expeditions make you cantankerous. If you get out of temper with life, Malory, you're ruined as an artist, though you may do for a reformer. I assure you that art and reform are sworn foes. Don't trouble about social problems, study individuals as they are. A landscape painter might as well vex his soul about improving uncultivated lands by artificial manures. These are questions for the tiller of the soil."

"I have a relation," said Dick, "who calls England the land of the well-fed Muse. 'Pepsina,' he calls her."

"Interpret your relation to me."

"I understand him to mean that she sings on a full stomach. That our art and our poetry are addressed to the well-to-do; that art has become a luxury merely, and endeavours no longer to stir the pulse of the nation, to express its pain, to plead for noble sacrifice or patriotism."

"England!" said Tristram, contemptuously. "To

love art is to forget England — England of to-day. Some art may dwell here, but it has nothing to do with England."

"Patriotism and poetry ought to go hand in hand," said Dick, warmly; "we want a common cause and a common faith to unite us, and our poetry and our art ought to point to that. We are all going different ways, each selfishly playing for his own hand. In our religion, our politics, our morals, in everything we are divided. Some may be on the right track and the rest on the wrong. I believe in comradeship. If England is drifting — if half the world is going towards damnation — for God's sake let us all be damned together."

"The devil!" exclaimed Tristram.

"And I believe we are drifting. I don't see what the remedy is to be unless we have some great disaster. I should like to see the money-lenders, and editors of financial papers and society papers, and sweaters persecuted to-day like the Jews were persecuted long ago. I should like myself to assist in breaking up half the printing-presses and knocking down half the palaces and clubs and hotels in London."

"Spare my club, you young firebrand," said Tristram, laughing. "I tell you, Malory, you are not fit to be an artist. You must give up the thought of it. Your mind ought to be occupied with Giovanni Dupré, and Wagmüller, and Rodin, and Flaxman. I swear I am getting an appetite. I am glad you are

1141168

going to the theatre. I recommend the burlesque at the Gaiety." He hailed a cab. "If you have no engagement come to dinner on Tuesday."

A few minutes after parting with Tristram Dick met another acquaintance.

"Hullo, Connie!" he cried, "who'd have thought of meeting you?"

"Well, now, if this isn't ridiculous," laughed Connie; "I was just thinking of you."

"Ridiculous," agreed Dick, with doubts as to her veracity.

It was not their first meeting since they had travelled to Riplow together. Dick had seen her on two or three occasions recently; for Connie was acting as a model to one of his artist friends. According to her own account she had had many strange adventures since they had parted on the towing-path. All he knew for certain was that she had been engaged at one of the inferior music halls at the East End, and had afterwards taken an unimportant part in a pantomime at one of the large theatres. Here Headly, the artist, had seen her and approved her beauty. He had made her a liberal offer to sit as his model for a contemplated picture, and she had accepted. It pleased her to think that her beauty was appreciated; her vanity, not the remuneration, made her consent. She was now about sixteen years old, but there was little about her which suggested childhood.

"And where are you off to, Connie?" Dick asked.

"I'm disengaged. Now, wouldn't you like to take me to some place of amusement? A pal asked me to come to tea, and go with her to a music hall after, but I'm not bound."

"Very well, let's have a happy evening together. Come and have tea, and I'll take you somewhere afterwards. Will you?"

"Will I? Won't I just? but couldn't you make it dinner instead of tea. I should like to go just for once to a tip-top place where the toffs go, and there's a band. That's if you don't mind being seen with me."

"Don't you think tea is more suitable for young ladies of your age?"

She glanced at him in a way to make him laugh.

"All right," said Dick, "it shall be dinner."

"You're an angel. And after dinner we'll go to the theatre. I don't care a pin about the piece. I want to go to a place where I can see the swells. I'll be one myself to-night."

"We ought to be in evening dress to go among the grand people at the theatre."

Connie clapped her hands. "What luck," she cried. "Now, what do you think I've on under my ulster. I've got on the Greek dress with a border same as the picture. Mr. Headly gave it me to-night to take away, because he had no use for it now the picture's done, and the girl that cleans the studio was outside, and I promised her I'd give her a dress, because she's in rags; so I gave her my old 'un straight off my back and came away in this."

They went to a well-known restaurant, an over-decorated haunt of the Philistine pleasure-seeker, — one of the places Dick had been anxious to rase to the ground when he was speaking to Tristram an hour before. But it was exactly what Connie desired. After taking off her ulster and arranging her hair she joined him in the passage, and walked into the dining-room before him with her head in the air. In her Greek dress, which she had drawn close at the waist to make it look more modern, she was amazingly handsome. Dick could hardly conceal his admiration.

"Will I do?" she asked him, with a confident air, as they took their places at a little table, under general scrutiny.

"What a transformation!" he laughed; "it's Cinderella."

"My boots ain't like Cinderella's, but it's a good thing they can't be seen. You'll buy me a pair of shoes, won't you, and a pair of gloves, before we go to the theatre?"

A waiter bent over the young lady:

"Purée de Pois St. Germain — Fausse Tortue Claire."

Connie blushed slightly and hesitated for a moment. Dick helped her to choose.

"The people who come to these places like to have their food in French," he told her; "they think it is more refined."

She was a little anxious at the commencement of

the meal; she wished to be correct in her selection of fork, knife, or spoon, and watched her companion carefully; but her confidence soon returned, and her spirits rose high.

"Well, this is the sort of place for me," said she, surveying the golden columns and cornices with rapture. "And what swells they all look; nothing but shirt fronts and low necks all over the shop. And to think how soon it'll all be over! It's like Cinderella — got to be changed back again. You can just fancy how dismal it is at my lodgings; there's no one there at all but Emily — that's the slavey. Mother Pring's gone to Croydon to her sick daughter, and the other young person that lodges there's gone to stay with a friend. Emily's pious, and what do you think she does when she's got no work to do? She scrubs part of the kitchen floor, whether it wants it or not, to keep her thoughts off young men. I say! how many more courses?"

Dick's spirits were rising too. This adventure with Connie was a relief after a depressing afternoon. He looked at her with satisfaction, partly on account of her beauty, partly because of her strange attire; he was pleased at his own indifference to appearances and to the criticism of others.

"This sort of thing, which you seem to like so much," he said, laughing at her last remarks, "is just what I hate. I'm sick of all this show. I feel more than half inclined to clear out, and go to the backwoods of America or somewhere."

"My word! you don't mean it! Well, if you go, I wish you'd take me with you for company. What fun we had that day after I ran away!"

"Yes, hadn't we! Let me give you some champagne," said the ex-Asynepangelist. "And tell me what became of my donkey?"

"Oh! didn't I tell you? I sold him to an ostler at Riplow for a quid. I thought of you that evening among your grand friends. I liked the looks of that young man — your friend with the moustache."

"He's in India now."

"And the young lady — the handsome princess; I expect you got thick with her."

Dick looked displeased; he had not seen Miss Chillington since that night, but she was often in his thoughts; he objected to discuss her with Connie.

"She lives in Ireland. Well, Connie, now the picture's finished, what are you going to do with yourself?"

"No more modelling for me," said Connie. "It's dull work; and if the artist hadn't been a bit fond of me, and come round now and then to make things lively, I could never have sat still for so long. Well, I'm ambitious. I'm going in for the theatrical profession. I suppose I must be content with engagements at a music hall to begin with."

Dick did not like the prospect for her, but he had no alternative to offer. "I hate all these music halls," he said. "I wish you lived in a jolly country

place like my home. There's nothing in all London as good as a country lane in the spring when a south-west wind is blowing, and a thrush —"

"'Oh, that we two were mying!'" cried Connie. "I know that song, but this is November." It was no use being sentimental with this young lady.

"It's an awful pity," he added, "that you have no nice friends — girls, I mean. I wish you knew some ladies."

"I prefer gentlemen," replied Connie.

It was time to go. Connie put on her waterproof again rather reluctantly, and they drove towards the theatre, after a pair of gloves and a pair of shoes had been purchased.

In the cab she slipped her hand into Dick's. "I wonder at your being so shy," she said. "I mean, you never tried to give me a kiss and that, like some of them. Because, you know, you don't look good; you look like 'don't care as came to the gallows.' Do you love me at all?"

"Yes, very much, Connie."

"The others take notice of me because I'm pretty; I know them. I don't suppose they care much about me. Well, here's the theatre. I say! I'm getting a bit funky about going in."

Their seats were not in a conspicuous place, and they did not attract special attention from their neighbours during the performance, except once or twice when Connie laughed very loud indeed or made unusually audible comments; but when it was

over Dick had a trial to go through. He was waiting for her in a crowded vestibule when she came over to him from the cloak-room carrying, not wearing, her ulster, and looking defiant.

"Wait and see who's coming out," she said, as Dick took her ulster from her.

"Any one I know?"

"You bet. She may think herself very grand, but she stared at me in a way that I couldn't abide."

"You didn't say anything to her, did you?" he asked, laughing.

"Well, I said, 'It's me; perhaps you'll know me next time!'"

"Who is she?"

"You'll see fast enough. I believe she knew me, but was too proud to speak. Here she comes."

It was Miss Chillington, who came out to her father, who was standing near Dick. As she caught sight of him, a smile of recognition came to her eyes; she seemed about to stop and speak to him when she saw Connie, who had taken his arm. The colour rose at the same instant to her face and Dick's, but a moment after she looked as cold as a statue, and passed on.

This was the young man who had prided himself on his independence of appearances and of the opinion of others. It was one of the most wretched moments of his life. As they drove away in the cab he hardly heard what Connie was saying.

"She didn't seem inclined to be very friendly."

"No, I suppose not, that is — I wish to goodness, Connie, you'd be more particular how you speak to ladies. You must have been very rude to her."

"My aunt!" cried Connie. "Here's a to-do! here's temper! I see how the land lies. You said you wished I knew some ladies. Why didn't you introduce me to her? And if you're ashamed of me directly you meet one of your friends we can say good-bye at once. You can stop the cab now if you like."

"Don't be a goose," said Dick, who saw that he had no one to blame but himself, and was trying to make the best of his discomfiture. "It makes no difference. But you are fearfully cheeky, you know."

"Maybe I am," said Connie, mollified by his tone. "Well, there's no doubt she's a beauty. She might be the queen of Ireland from the way she walks and looks; and what a dress! white ostrich feathers on the body! and wasn't her hair spiff? I say! you're thinking about her again. It's funny, both times I've seen her I've been with you. She'll think there's something between us."

Dick looked cross. "Well, I hope you enjoyed yourself," he said.

Connie twined her arm in his. "You were a real dear to take me. Will you take me again, some day? Now we're pals again, aren't we?"

"Yes, rather. Look here, Connie, this is where I must get out; I want a walk after the heat of the theatre. The cab can take you home."

"Oh, come all the way," said Connie, persuasively, "and come in and see my room, and I'll make you a cup of cocoa for your supper. It will be fine to finish up the evening, and I'm all by myself."

"Perhaps another evening — not to-night." Miss Chillington was in his thoughts. He stopped the cab.

"Well," said Connie, "you've been very kind; you've been kinder than any one else ever was to me, and you can have a kiss if you want, and that's more than I'd give any one."

## CHAPTER X.

### A SUPPER PARTY.

In the following spring Humphry Wrixon came up to London, and, as was his custom, took a room at the Tavistock Hotel. He had not written to let his nephew know that he was coming. For months very little had been heard from him at Farinder; but Humphry had gathered from his occasional letters that it was not well with him, and he determined to pay him a visit.

Humphry's prognostics of his nephew's development had been correct up to a point; but, as with those good men who prepare forecasts of our British weather, however farseeing may be the prophets who pronounce on the soul's morrow, unexpected and disturbing causes are constantly a source of perplexity. The fault is not with the meteorologist nor with the student of human nature; it must rest on the British weather and the human soul.

On the evening after Humphry's arrival in London he invited Professor Wintersea to dinner, and afterwards proposed that they should give Dick the pleasant surprise of a visit at his rooms. He was

living at this time at Chelsea with Tristram and Headly, the artist.

It happened to be a special occasion among the Chelsea comrades, who had met at Tristram's rooms to celebrate the rejection of a picture which one of them had sent to the Royal Academy. The gathering this evening had, too, the unusual attraction of ladies' society. The festivity was a freak of Tristram; the young ladies, who had acted as models to the artists present, had been entertained at dinner, together with one or two other fair ones less directly connected with art. They had now retired from the feast chamber to an adjoining room, whither most of the men had followed, and were smoking. Half a dozen men, intent on their talk and on their wine, remained at the dinner table, Tristram and Malory among them.

"The fun of this sort of thing gets poorer as one gets older," the poet said, nodding his head in the direction of the room where the others were laughing. "I believe, after all, your virtuous man who goes to church regularly, and has a faithful wife and a suburban villa, and children to welcome him home at night, has the best of it. A man should marry before it is too late. If I were you I should marry. Excuse me, Malory, I am not joking, though this sentiment may surprise you."

"Why don't you marry yourself?" Dick asked.

"Ah, Malory, you ask an impossibility. Discover a woman to my taste, and I promise you I would

marry her instantly, if she would consent. I will describe her. She must be exceedingly beautiful, beguiling in manner, brilliant in mind. She must be capable not only of winning my love but of keeping it. She must be my superior in everything except, let me say, in verse — I could not admit her as a rival there. She must attract the admiration of other men — this is important. And while she is pure as the snow on an inaccessible mountain peak, she must be full of passion and warmth, and must constantly keep me on the verge of jealousy. She must love and admire me, but make almost a concession of her love, and keep me in a perpetual state of wooing."

"Oh," said Dick, "you would combine, in one woman, a nunnery, a ladies' college, and a harem."

"As I observed," continued Tristram, seriously, "I ask for an impossibility. The women who present themselves are not to my taste. Of mere beauty of face a few weeks would weary me. I should require a new style of beauty as much as I want a new charm of scenery. An intellectual woman without beauty would be better as a friend than as a wife, while mere virtue without other charms is like an empty fire-proof safe."

Dick laughed appreciatively, and filled Tristram's glass.

"And suppose," he went on, "I found such a lady, and suppose I could induce her to marry me, — what right should I have to do so? Look at my

record for the last twenty years, and fancy my appropriating such a woman. A man should be able to come to her with a clean conscience, and, what is more important, sound lungs, strong nerves, and a good digestion. The last is almost more important than a clean conscience — it means good temper. But you could give a fair account of yourself in these details; for you it is not too late."

"The woman you describe," answered Dick, "is the creation of a jaded mind. She is a monster; there is no harmony about her. You have forgotten all about love, I believe. Think of your own first poems. You love a woman, and her faults become a joy to you."

"Quite true; at first they are a joy to you; afterwards they turn and rend you. You ought to have no difficulty in finding a wife to your taste. You have faith in woman still; I envy you; I had it once. I have lost my taste for a simple good woman, just as my palate has ceased to approve simple honest fare. You will excuse my remarking that you are going the way to lose it also. You see I am like Dives warning his younger brothers."

"I tell you, Tristram," said Dick, warmly, "I don't mean to marry, and there is no reason why I should choose your alternative course. There are women who are too good for us; I have no intention of seeking one. And these girls here whom you look upon as created for your amusement, whose weakness men take advantage of, I say they are bet-

ter than we. I have done with the high and noble. I cast in my lot with the sinful and disappointed. If I married at all, I would take one of these and stand by her weakness and folly."

"Good heavens, boy, what are you saying? you are drivelling, Malory. The wine has got into your head. Oh dear, oh dear, just listen to Cleopatra laughing" (the ladies were known by their pictorial names); "that silly little cackling laugh of hers is maddening; no doubt you youngsters think it charming. I suppose my blood is getting cold. I require more wine than you. I really apologise for attempting to lecture. I have had my innings; I have followed my inclinations; I have sought my own pleasure, and, now that I am tired of the life, I say it is worthless. But I am interested in your work, and your work is not progressing; you are drifting. This life of ours does not suit you. Perhaps these women are getting hold of you. Women and good work don't go together. If your relationship with a woman does not bring out the best in *her*, it will bring out the worst in *you*."

Dick replied hotly: "These girls who are looked down upon, are they any worse than the ladies whose virtue is protected by the British constitution and the British god, Respectability, and cramped by custom till it is as deformed as a Chinese woman's foot? Their ideals are not high, but they have no chance. I am sick of high motives, and ideals, and noble aims. The few people who can achieve them must

stand alone, apart from the mass of humanity. I count it ignoble to seek to be noble. If you have the power to be so while your fellows cannot, it is deserting them. I would rather remain with the sinful and be damned."

"Easy enough to do that," replied Tristram, shrugging his shoulders. It was no use arguing with this hot-headed fellow.

Coffee had been sent into the adjoining room. Tristram went in, leaving Dick to meditate at the dinner table. A girl's laugh reminded him unpleasantly of a fact he had almost forgotten whilst talking to the poet: Connie was in the next room, and the man who had introduced her to the entertainment was Eustace, his old schoolfellow, the golden-haired little fellow who had wept at his castigation.

Dick had seen a good deal of her lately; he was growing more and more interested in her; he saw the dangers which beset her, and was anxious. He was angry, almost jealous, at her intimacy with Eustace. Connie had indeed spread her toils for the boy; she was amusing herself with him, but that was all. An influence of which Dick knew nothing held her somewhat in check. She had a true lover. Robert Strong, Dick's friend, the hard-headed Socialist, had been completely conquered by her. His introduction to her, some six months back, had been the knocking down of a man on her behalf, outside a music hall, and a consequent fortnight's imprisonment. When he came out Connie had

endeavoured to show her gratitude. Strong's intense admiration and devotion to her flattered her vanity; and though she could not altogether understand him, she admired him for his masterfulness and for the sacrifices he made to help his poorer fellow-workmen. She refused to marry him; but Strong, whose extreme principles at this time made him scornful of laws and customs, regarded her as his wife. As his wife she had lived with him, and he had been happy for a few months. But she could not exist without excitement; recently she had got an engagement at an East End music hall, and had gone to lodgings of her own, and only visited him occasionally. He, who was a man of iron with other men, was a child in her hands; he was unable to influence her, and had to content himself with watching over her to the best of his power, and hoping sadly for better days.

When Dick joined the others, nearly all the men were smoking, and some of the girls had lighted cigarettes. A young burlesque actress, brought by an art critic, was in the middle of the room amusing the company by mimicking the bearing and manner of several friends, absent and present. Laughter and applause were abundant.

Humphry Wrixon and the Professor, on their arrival, heard these sounds of festivity, and conjectured that there was a party. Of its nature Humphry inquired of the man who opened the door for them, and was informed that it was composed of

"artists and litery gents and Bo'emians." The Professor was in favour of retiring and choosing another evening for their visit, but Humphry, anticipating fun, would not hear of it, and sent up their names.

A sudden pause followed their entrance. Dick jumped up in consternation. Every one scrutinised the new-comers, but Humphry walked across the room the picture of smiling ease. "I perceive," he murmured to himself, "that the Bo'emians are ladies." "Well, my dear nephew, we thought we would give you a surprise. I came up to town rather suddenly. Pray, present us to your host."

Dick introduced them to Tristram uncomfortably. "I wish to heaven you had told me you were coming," he said in an undertone to Humphry.

Tristram enjoyed the situation; he welcomed them with grave courtesy. "If we had known you were in town we might have had the pleasure of seeing you at dinner. The bond of our union to-night is the picture you see on the easel; we have met to praise it and to drink confusion to the hanging committee of the Royal Academy for rejecting it. Professor Wintersea, it is a great pleasure to make your acquaintance. Your reputation has reached even so unscientific a person as myself."

The Professor was greatly embarrassed. "I am much obliged to you — very good of you indeed" — he glanced vaguely at the picture — "a very remarkable production; very brilliant indeed."

Every one was listening; an audible titter from one of the young ladies broke the silence.

"You perceive, Professor," said Humphry, "that these gentlemen require, and take, a little relaxation sometimes after the strain of artistic and literary work. We expected to find you, Dick, alone, studying the lectures of Mr. Flaxman. It is pleasant to discover, eh, Wintersea? that the working mood is not always upon him."

"Exactly, exactly," replied the Professor; "it shows how many departments the human mind possesses. It is very desirable; an occasional indulgence is no doubt followed by a resilience."

"Well, I'm sure!" said Cleopatra; and the Professor, thoroughly bewildered by the laugh which this simple remark excited, took the seat which was offered to him. He was gradually taking in the scene, and became more and more uncomfortable. The ladies perplexed him most. He had heard much, latterly, of strong-minded women who claim the friendship of men, and concluded that the ladies present belonged to that advanced guard. Humphry was taking the scene in also, and grew more and more amused.

Dick hardly said a word; he was ill at ease; he sought for a scheme to get the Professor away, but saw mischief in Humphry's eye.

Though general conversation was resumed, a breach for the time had been made in the evening's festivities. Humphry and Tristram held the talk.

"I suppose," Humphry was saying, "that, like everything else, painting is greater to-day than it has ever been before. The picture on the easel, which we celebrate to-night, seems to me a better one than any landscape of more than a hundred years back which I ever saw."

A young artist, who had been enjoying his wine, struck in: "Do you seriously think, old chap, that I'm better than Claude; because, if so, I should like to know more of you. You admire my work, don't you, Diana?" he asked, turning to his fair neighbour.

Tristram caught the young man's eye and silenced him. The Professor looked at the door; he was considering the possibility of flight.

"And yet," said Humphry, "this interesting art, I suppose, cannot hope for a future."

"That is serious news for us," said another. "Now, why do you think so?"

"I should have thought," answered Humphry, "that, as with other forms of handicraft, machinery would be your enemy. The future of photography seems to me simply gigantic; we should lose much, of course, but should we not gain more? — in truthfulness and accuracy, for example. And think of the masses! I take it that, in the future, we shall have an equalisation of wealth which will check the paying large sums for pictures; and how nice it will be when, for a simple shilling, a hardworking waiter or constable may have an admirable and accurate pic-

ture of his wife done by some machine power, instead of the portrait he now hangs up, which, no doubt, cost him five pounds; I mean the one in which she is dressed in blue silk, and wears the gold chain which she has borrowed from her sister who married the publican."

"*I* should be very sorry to borrow anything from anybody when *I* was going to be photoed, I must *say*," said one of the young ladies, who was listening.

"I am sure you would, madam," agreed Humphry, "'beauty unadorned,' you know."

Few were quite certain as to whether the stranger were a hopeless Philistine or a scoffer, he spoke with such gravity; but it was evident that he was extremely self-possessed, and was disposed to be agreeable. His last gallant speech provoked great laughter.

Tristram was wondering with some apprehension how much longer Humphry would be allowed to monopolise attention and interfere with the ordinary course of the evening's revelry. His friends were gentlemen, and he had little fear, even on such an evening as this, that any one of them would be discourteous to Humphry or Wintersea; but there were young men there who had drunk a good deal, and he was sure that before long the fun would take some form which would dismay, at least, the Professor. Dick's anxiety had been brief; wine had made him reckless. He had been horrified at their arrival at first; now he did not care what happened, but he

was ready to quarrel with any one who was disrespectful to his visitors.

Tristram took up the conversation with Humphry. "You interest me, Mr. Wrixon, when you say that we are superior to our ancestors, not only in art, but in everything else. Now I believe we have gone back. There is less nobility in men than there was."

"Do you think so really," said Humphry. "I should have thought there was not a single point in which we were not superior to our ancestors. Not to speak of all the obvious advancement in knowledge, and the blessings of civilisation, I should have thought that in mere personal qualities, in physical strength and size, in the beauty of our women (if we may trust the portraits of the great masters you admire — and a picture usually flatters; when I see a lady with two chins in a portrait I always conclude she had three), and in character, in morality too, we are very far ahead of any previous time."

"Yes, yes," said Dick, impatiently; "we have gained something, I suppose, in the comforts of civilisation, in luxury, in peace; but we are worse men than our fathers. As Tristram says, we have lost nobility. We have peace; but what sort of men do we breed in the times of peace? Look at our pigmies in manufacturing districts! I don't care twopence for the blessings of civilisation. Look at fellows like ourselves who think about pleasure, and look at the whole race of weak-kneed city clerks and commercial gentlemen who have not

a spark of heroism left in them, poor devils! They cannot help it: there is nothing to bring the heroism out of the race now."

"Do you think so?" protested Humphry; "I think they are very noble in their way."

"Not you," said Dick.

"And there are other forms of heroism besides running a man through with a sword. Look how patient they are, and how they undergo privation to educate their daughters! I believe," he continued, solemnly, "that almost any one of us is a better man than St. Paul, — and I need not say I admire St. Paul greatly."

"The wicked creature! what'll he say next?" whispered Connie.

"By Jove! Bless my soul, Humphry, are you serious?" cried Mr. Wintersea, startled.

"Perfectly. I don't see how we can help it; it is so much easier. Take such a simple matter as humanity — treatment of women and animals and enemies — and compare it with that of the ancients. As to your great heroes of antiquity, my dear Dick, we simply could not know them now. Ulysses was a person we could not have admitted to our drawing-rooms."

Tristram laughed heartily.

"Seriously, my nephew," he concluded, "I consider disbelief in our own age the very worst form of infidelity. I advise you to give this consideration."

"There is a great deal of infidelity now, I am

afraid," said Connie to the Professor, next whom she was now sitting. "Have you read *Duncan Thompson?*"

*Duncan Thompson* was an amiable novel of the day which had gained considerable notoriety, chiefly from the fact that the hero's theological views were mildly unorthodox. It happened that the Professor had taken it up, but had found it so wearisome that he had not finished it.

"I tried it; I read part of it," said he, "but I could not go on."

"Ah," said Connie, "I know. I have heard that many people find it very unsettling."

Tristram shouted with laughter; the idea of *Duncan Thompson* unsettling the Professor's faith was very funny.

"For goodness sake listen!" said some one in the background. "Connie and the Professor are talking theology. Come — this is an evening to remember."

"Ah, it was hardly on that account," stammered Wintersea, anxious and unable to explain.

"You thought the hero too pi?" suggested Connie.

"Pi! dear me, I hardly understand." He was not acquainted with the slang abbreviation of the word pious. "Ah, yes. Bless my soul! of course, very good, I see — an insoluble character, an enigma, one who bears the same relation to his surroundings as the diameter to the circumference of a circle." He began to entertain a high opinion of his companion's intellect. "You are a student of mathematics?" he asked.

"I have not gone very far," replied Connie, conscious that the conversation was amusing the listeners, and willing to continue it with a show of seriousness.

"Ah, well," smiled the Professor, "but you are a student."

"I haven't much time for reading; my profession is art. This young lady is in the same business. She is in the Grosvenor this year — Number 291."

"Really," said Wintersea, bowing gallantly. "I am very glad to hear of your success. I must pay a visit to that excellent institution and find out your work — 291." He made a memorandum of the number.

These Bohemian women are not so unpleasant after all, he thought. He had not been more uneasy in her presence than with other ladies. He appreciated gifts in woman, and was an advocate for her admission to the professions of men; her mere feminine charms he never noticed until they were categorically pointed out to him.

He had now a general impression that his companion was good-looking, and she was certainly most agreeable. He found his shyness departing, and he was commencing further conversation with her when some tumult in another part of the room again filled him with misgiving, and caused him to consult his watch and Humphry's face.

But Humphry was not disposed to stir; he was now asking for a song, and his suggestion was received with acclamation.

"Perhaps you sing yourself, sir?" a lady asked, innocently.

"A little, my dear," replied Humphry.

"And would you sing? Oh, *do!*"

"Oh, yes, do!" said everybody.

"Well," he consented, "perhaps after some others have made a beginning, I might do so."

"My good uncle, are you mad?" cried Dick. "Why, Tristram, he never sang a song in his life."

"G — good gracious! Humphry," exclaimed the Professor, aghast.

But neither Dick nor Wintersea knew half the accomplishments of Humphry; there was a time when his songs had been popular in a merrier and more honest, if a rougher company than the present.

One of the younger men sang a German student's song with a chorus, which was heartily shouted. The evening was about to begin in earnest. A serious song followed, called "For ever and for ever." The Professor's politeness made him feel it a duty to express approbation.

"Very charming," said he; "very excellent. 'For ever and for ever,' exactly, 'For ever and for ever.'"

A brief interval followed. Connie's arm silently stole round the Professor's waist, not unobserved by others.

"G — G — God bless my soul!" he cried, jumping up and turning pale; "this is — this is very unusual. My dear Dick, I must really —" He retired hastily

to the other end of the room, in a perfect storm of laughter.

"Damn you all!" said Dick, in a huge passion. "Is this the way you treat your guests? Come, Professor, we won't stay here a moment longer," and taking Wintersea's arm, he hurried him out of the room.

Humphry smiled blandly; he went over to Tristram to say good-bye.

"I am awfully sorry this has happened," apologised Tristram. "I am greatly vexed that Professor Wintersea is offended. I think he is a dear old boy. I hope you will be able to explain to him. You know what evenings like this mean."

"It is not worth a moment's anxiety," replied Humphry. "Thank you for a delightful hour. I ought not to have brought my friend here to-night. Good-bye, gentlemen — and — ladies" — he bowed to the room generally — "I hope you will spend a pleasant evening, and I look forward to the pleasure of meeting you all again."

## CHAPTER XI.

### CHELSEA TO WESTMINSTER.

AFTER saying good-bye to his relations Dick walked up and down in front of the house. The street was quiet; the dark space of sky above the houses bright with stars. He began to think calmly about the scene he had just quitted. While he was meditating Connie came to the door with her hat on, and seeing him, ran to his side.

"I thought I'd find you," she said. "Are you going to forgive me? Please!"

"It's not you I'm angry with, Connie; it's the others and myself."

"I behaved very bad to the old bird, but I'm very, very sorry."

"It's our fault," said Dick. "We have no business to let you spend evenings like this with us. We ought to treat you like ladies, and then you would treat us as ladies would."

Connie was submissive for once. "I wish I could be like that. I'm a bad lot; I wish I was better."

She perceived the way in which Dick was to be attracted. She spoke with an air of sincerity, almost deceiving herself — him completely.

"Connie, something must be done," he said. "We must have a talk. I mean to get you out of this sort of life. I mean to get away from it myself. Look here; are you ready to go? I'll take you, and we can talk."

"I promised Mr. Eustace."

"I'm going with you," said Dick.

She took his arm, and they walked down the quiet street towards the river.

"I'm glad to be along with you," said Connie; "it does me good. I was afraid you were going to give up being pals. You hardly spoke to-night. That's why I was so cheeky to your friend. If you go back on me I don't care what I do, and you're the only one as I mind."

Dick looked at her. Her face was very beautiful. A definite purpose as to this girl was shaping itself in his mind. He had spoken to Tristram recklessly about marrying a girl from her class — that was in a spirit of defiance — now he was thinking of it in the spirit of the reformer.

"I shall stand by you, you may depend on that, Connie," he said.

They came to the river-side, and stood for a short while looking at the dark water. There was a jetty close by at which the river steamers called. Some rowing boats were bobbing in the ripples at its side. In obedience to a whim of Connie, who was always on the alert for novelty, Dick arranged with one of the boatmen, who was smoking his pipe on the jetty,

to row them down the river as far as Westminster Bridge. He laughed at Connie, but the idea pleased him too.

The last steamer had gone, and the river was very quiet. Connie and Dick sat together in the stern. The boatman understood them to be lovers, and did not attempt conversation.

The sky, which had seemed a narrow channel above the street, was now as a great open sea; dark reaches of the river were broken by lines of trembling gold where the lights on the bridges were reflected; the night wind blew warm south-west down stream with a message of the country and the English spring; the roar of the streets was far away; the splash of the oars and the ripple of the water pleasant to hear.

"I wonder why you should trouble about me," Connie said, after awhile. "What's it matter to you whether I'm straight or not? no one else cares."

"No, that's just it; it's because no one else cares."

"Oh," she answered in a disappointed tone, "that's the only reason."

"No, not the only reason. But they *don't* care, Connie; not one of them cares a straw for you really."

"I'm not so sure about that," she replied, forgetting her part for a minute.

"Well, they don't act as if they did; they're amusing themselves only."

"And may be they're amusing me. But I know what you say's right. I suppose I shall be sorry some day, but I may as well enjoy myself while I have the chance. If what you say's true, and nobody cares for me, why should I trouble?"

"I care," said Dick; "I care tremendously."

"And there may be one or two besides. There's your friend, Mr. Eustace; he's very kind; he's coming to-morrow evening to take me out to—"

Dick got angry. "He shall do no such thing, Connie. Look here, promise me you won't go with him or with any of them. It will end badly. I say you must not go with him. He's playing the fool with you."

"And what are you doing, Dick?" she asked, quietly.

"It's quite time we both of us made a complete change in our ways, Connie," he said, after a pause, "a real, total change. I think I shall chuck art and go abroad somewhere where the life is honester and healthier and simpler. Would you like to go too, with me?"

"Yes," said Connie, eagerly.

"What! far away to some out-of-the-world settlement where there are no theatres, and no shops, and no excitement."

"I should be with you," said Connie.

He put his arm round her affectionately. The boatman discreetly turned towards the bows, and pushed instead of pulling at the oars.

"We will be married at once — as soon as it can be arranged — within a fortnight, Connie," he said; "and it must be kept secret. I don't want my people, I don't want any one, to know yet. I wish to show you to them after you have had a few years' change from your present surroundings. After awhile we'll come back, and then I'll take you to them. We'll face the world together and defy it — and win." He found that Connie was sobbing. "My poor girl, what is it?" he asked.

"I'm not worth it," she said; "you don't know me. I'm a bad lot."

"Yes, I know what you mean. Think of the future, not of the past."

"You don't know half, or you would not keep your arm round me now."

"I tell you I do," said Dick; "and all that is going to be forgotten, and all the future is going to be different and bright."

Triumph, gratitude, shame, affection for the man were all surging in Connie's breast. She said nothing, but stared over the edge of the boat at the black water. There was a flash of light and a pulsing on the river. A little steamer passed and threw bright rose hues from her port-light on the girl. Then they had the dark river and the starlight once more to themselves.

Dick was drawn to Connie with something more than the affection of a protector. She knew the symptoms of tone and manner, and was well pleased with the change.

"It's not only to reform me, but do you love me for myself, Dick?" she whispered.

"Yes, Connie, for ever," he answered; and so their troth was plighted, and Dick's destiny decided.

But even then, as the boat dropped down on the tide, and they sat together hand in hand, their thoughts were not all of each other. There was a picture of a desperate man before Connie's eyes — of a sweet-hearted, unstained, and unstainable girl before Dick's. She was thinking with fear of Robert Strong — he with a strange regret of Margaret Longfield.

## CHAPTER XII.

### HOLY MATRIMONY.

A FORTNIGHT later Dick and Connie were married at a registry office in London. In three days they were to sail for America. In the meantime he had paid a hurried visit to Farinder, and told them his intention of making a break in his present life, and roughing it in the west for a year or two. Humphry was neither altogether surprised nor displeased; he believed this would be the best means of clearing his atmosphere and removing his discontent, and that he would return to his work in a healthier frame of mind. The old man was sadly disappointed. Margaret Longfield was anxious, but said nothing. Dick avoided her, she thought; it was not a happy visit.

Dick had kept his intended marriage secret, but on the day before it took place he called on Robert Strong with the intention of telling him. He felt sure of his warm sympathy, his complete approval of the step which he had taken, and this he could feel of no other. He longed for the confidence of a friend, now that he was leaving home and breaking with his old associations; but, unhappily for him,

Strong was not at home, and he had to satisfy his desire for comradeship in a letter.

It was a disappointment to Connie not to be married in a church. Whenever the thought of marriage had entered her head she had pictured herself clothed in white, wreathed with orange blossom; the wedding march had sounded for her as she walked down the church; slippers and rice had followed her carriage; for in her wedding picture the husband she had seen had not been a poor man. But she had a good reason for not pressing Dick to acknowledge their marriage openly, and for making no objection to their immediate departure from England. She was fond of him in her way, and she understood that he was making a sacrifice in marrying her. She was not entirely without conscience, and her relationship with Strong was a trouble to her, less on Strong's account than Dick's. She knew Strong to be his valued friend; she trembled to think of what might happen if her secret were known, and for this she was glad they were going away.

On the day of the wedding they went to a village in Surrey, Brighton and other places which Connie suggested having been rejected by Dick, who was fearful of meeting acquaintances. It was a pretty little hiding-place in the woodland; the old-fashioned gabled inn was set in a garden which sloped on one side to the open fields, and had the curve of a little stream for its boundary. It was an ideal nook for romantic young lovers, not for this pair,

though for a day or two Connie was prepared to approve the seclusion.

An elderly couple, with a mutual interest in deep-sea fishermen and botanical specimens, were the only other visitors at the inn. At dinner they were attracted by the young people, and were confirmed in their opinion that they were newly married by hearing Dick ask Connie if she knew anything about cookery. After dinner the lady spoke to Connie with the affectionate interest which matrons give to brides, and Connie responded modestly. Dick was well pleased with her; for once she was simply dressed in white; her figure, her dark eyes and hair had never looked so attractive, he thought, and he expressed his appreciation.

They went into the garden, and sat in a summer-house at the edge of the brook. The blue May day had passed through a golden evening to rosy twilight; the scent of the meadows and of the garden were in the air; a thrush still sang for them. Dick and Connie sat hand in hand; they played the part of lovers very well.

Dick fancied that he had married Connie to save her, but without doubt if she had been plain instead of handsome he would not have done so. Her attractions as a young woman had as much to do with his decision as his own quixotic nature and his spirit of defiance. There was no true love between them; the love-light had never been in their eyes. He was drawn to her; but it was not by love, for love is

impossible when there is not a solid basis of comradeship; nor by passion, for passion is impossible when the bond is not between soul and soul. Sex and sentiment were aping the parts of passion and comradeship, a disguise which is always found out before long. For the clasp of hands, the touch of lips, what are these in themselves? But when they are an expression, an answer, from the soul of one beloved, what are they not? What wealth could the world give in exchange for them?

From the change in her manner, which he had already noticed, Dick was hopeful that in the course of a year or two Connie would be a wife whom he could exhibit without apprehension. He was thinking of this when she asked him how long they were likely to be away from England.

"I should think a couple of years, at the outside," he answered.

"And then you'll take me to your folks? You won't be ashamed of me?"

"No, proud."

"What a lark it will be! I wonder what my Uncle Humphry will think about it. Shall I have to call him uncle? And when we come back I'm to be a lady — pals with your lady friends, Miss Longfield and the Irish princess. You won't be ashamed of me before them?"

"What nonsense! of course not," replied Dick, with a tone of vexation in his voice, which Connie noticed.

"I'm jealous," she said. "I believe you used to be in love with one of them. I'll be even with her when I find out which of 'em it was."

The subject was unpleasant to Dick; he was provokingly silent.

"After all," observed Connie, "it's you ought to be the jealous one, not me; and you don't seem to mind. I don't believe you love me."

"Yes, I do, Connie; that's why I take you as you are."

"No," she continued, with some excitement, "you don't, or it would make you mad to think of it — to think what's been between me and others, friends of your own."

"Don't, don't, Connie," said Dick, pained. "I told you it was best to forget everything in the past. I forgive you utterly. It was to save you from all this that I married you."

"If that's the only reason, then I wish you'd let it alone," said Connie. She was indignant at his ready forgiveness.

"For goodness sake be sensible, Connie," Dick replied; "of course I would not have married you if I had not loved you. Come, kiss and be friends."

Connie made peace very prettily, recovered, and laughed.

"And so I'm your wife, Dick, your wife; how funny it sounds! Till death us do part I'm to love and honour and obey. I wish we'd been married in a church too. I can't scarcely believe it's my own

finger with this wedding ring on it; and you were a dear to buy me this keeper when you said we should want all our cash for necessaries. Oh, I wish we hadn't to go on Thursday. No, Dick, I won't be stupid any more and say things. We'll only think about each other now. Yes, I want another; I shall make you too proud for anything, but you do kiss nicely."

The twilight slipped into night. Connie went to her room; Dick lighted a cigar and walked up and down the garden. Presently he went in; the sitting-room was empty. A minute afterwards he heard a rapid stride on the path; the door opened and Strong entered. He was deadly pale. When he saw Dick he was so agitated that he could not speak. Dick was utterly astonished.

"Strong!" he cried. "What on earth —"

"Thank God, I've found you," said Strong.

"What's the matter?" Dick asked. "Sit down; you're ill. I'll get you some brandy."

"I've come for my wife," said Strong.

"Your wife!"

"For Connie. She's my wife if she's any one's. I've come for her."

"What the devil are you talking about?" cried Dick. "Either you're a raving madman or you're a hopeless idiot."

Strong forced himself to be calm.

"Has she — has Connie told you anything? Did you know she knew me?"

"No, I don't believe she does. You're mad, Strong."

"No," said Strong, "I thought not from your letter. I knew you were honourable. She's deceived you, Mr. Malory. If you knew what she'd been to me you wouldn't have married her. Go and ask her."

It was Dick's turn to be agitated. "Go on," he said; "if you've anything more to say out with it."

"She's as much my wife," cried Strong, passionately, "as if she'd been to church with me. I wanted her to marry me. She would not; but it came to the same thing — she lived with me. After that what difference does it make whether or not you go to church or a registry office? She's your wife by law, but she's nothing to you, — nothing unless you love her better than I do, and by God I know you don't. She's my girl."

A terrible expression came into Dick's eyes.

"I know by your letter why you married her," Strong continued; "and if you'd known you wouldn't. It's my business to save her, not yours. She's nothing to you, she's everything to me. It won't break your heart to lose her. It will kill me."

"If you consider her your wife you might have looked after her a bit better," said Dick.

"Damn you," said Strong. "What chance had I when gentlemen as you call yourselves were playing the fool with her? I don't blame her, not one bit. Think of the temptation of a girl in our class being petted and admired and entertained by men in yours.

What chance have we? You're not satisfied with robbing us of our rights and grinding us down, you come and take the pick of our women, and spoil them and turn them into harlots when you get the chance, and then some of you are for reforming them and marrying them. If you wanted to reform a woman by marrying her, why the devil didn't you marry one of your own class — there are plenty to choose from who want as much reforming as any in ours."

Dick was far too seriously impressed by the terrible situation in which he found himself to heed Strong's abuse. Indeed he was perfectly calm; he could make allowance for and understand Strong's wrath. He knew that what he had said of his relationship to Connie was true.

"It's no use making a noise," he said; "it's too serious. I fancy you're speaking the truth. We'll see; I'll call her."

At the same moment Connie came into the room. She had loosened her hair, and it fell in great masses on her shoulders. When she saw Strong she gave a cry; she felt giddy for a moment, but she did not faint nor entirely lose her self-possession.

"Connie, I have come for you," said Strong.

She looked at Dick piteously.

"If what he says is true you'd better go with him," said Dick.

"I told you. You said — you said you'd forgive me everything," said Connie.

"Then it's true?"

Connie hid her face in the cushion of the sofa and sobbed.

Strong's manhood melted away at the sight of her. "Connie dearest, I don't blame you. I love you as much as ever. It's not too late; come with me. You are my wife," he whispered; but she took no heed.

"It's about time this infernal scene came to an end," said Dick. "Connie, you'd better go to your room. Here, give me your arm; I'll take you up. We'll talk in the garden, Strong."

Connie rose and went to her room by herself. Dick and Strong went out.

"Now," said Dick, "let's have no more nonsense and abuse. It's bad enough for you, but it's a hundred times worse for me. It seems to me my life is just about wrecked."

"You don't know what she has been and is to me," replied Strong; "how I worked for her, how she loved me, or seemed to. And if it hadn't been for the temptations she got into among your friends, she'd have married me."

"How long was she with you?"

"Two months — until almost the other day."

"What am I to do?" said Dick, thinking aloud.

"Oh, sir," cried Strong, "do you love her or not? It all depends on that. If you love her as I do, you might do more for her than I, and I could almost give her up to you, though it killed me. But if you don't — if you only married her for other reasons — Do you love her truly?"

"No," said Dick, "I detest the very thought of her, and I scorn myself for being such a fool as to attempt to reform her or reform anything in this accursed world."

"Then she's my wife, not yours."

Gradually the talk grew calmer. These men had been true friends; there was sympathy between their natures; the surface antagonism wore off; a common sorrow reunited them; each perceived the pain at the other's heart, the need for brotherhood. They paced the garden, talking earnestly till the night was late. Strong was the more hopeful of the two; he believed so fully in the power of his own love that he did not despair of influencing Connie for good. Dick's heart was hardened; he hardly cared what became of himself or Connie; he determined to have nothing more to do with her. He saw that Strong loved her desperately, and he would not have come between him and her even if he had cared more for her; but now she had no longer any attraction for him; she repelled him, and he felt she had ruined him.

Connie remained in her room in a state of miserable suspense. She saw by the way Dick had looked at her that there was little hope of beguiling him, but she did not entirely give up the game as lost. After awhile she could bear the uncertainty no longer. She opened the window, and as the men's figures drew near she called to Dick.

"Come to me, just one moment," she said; "I must speak to you."

"Don't," whispered Strong; "she'll conquer you; you won't be able to resist her."

"I'm going," he answered, "but it's only to say good-bye to her for ever."

When he was inside the door Connie flung her arms round him. "Dick, don't give me up; I love you only. You said you'd forgive me everything."

"Well, if it's any consolation to you, I'll forgive you, or try to," said he.

"Stay with me, Dick. I'm your wife, your real wife, and always must be. Send him away; I'll be true to you."

Even then, when the attraction which she had previously had for him had ceased, he was not entirely unmoved; he could not speak harshly.

"You are my husband," she said.

"Strong is your husband," he answered; "I have come to say good-bye to you. You are nothing — nothing to me any more."

"Is it because of Strong — because you know he cares? Don't you love me?"

"No," said Dick, "I never loved you."

Connie's eyes flashed. "Here," she said, "take your ring. I won't have it."

She went to the window and flung the ring out into the garden; then she threw herself on to the bed and burst into tears.

"Good-bye," Dick said. "If you want to make up a bit for the harm you have done, go back to Strong and be a good wife to him. I'm going abroad by myself. You won't hear of me again."

Thus our young couple ended their wedding day.

Dick had a few more words with Strong. He told him that he left Connie in his hands; he had done with her utterly. He said that he would leave some money at his bank for her use in case of need, and would send him an address in America to which he might write. They shook hands and parted. Strong to keep watch beneath Connie's window till morning; Dick to walk to London. Three days afterwards he sailed for America.

# THE MARPLOT.

## PART II.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE WEARING OF THE GREEN.

THE south-westerly wind blew up from the Atlantic over the Kerry mountains. Masses of cloud and mist rolled inland. Seaward the sky was beginning to clear, but over the valleys and heights a few miles from the coast there was not a break in the expanse of low cloud. Such days as these wrapped the wild country in melancholy beauty. The vast stretches of lonely mountain, the leagues of purple moorland, shadowy lakes, and peat-stained rivers, all softened and saddened together, touched the senses like the minor music of the songs which had their birth in this region.

Through this lonely land came Miss Elsinora Chillington. She could hardly have been more particular about appearance if she had been driving to the meet of a fashionable English hunt, instead of through Irish mountains. Her attire was bright, the bay cob which she drove and the little dog-cart without fault. Radiance and colour, a treasury of sunshine, came with her through the sombre scene. Her care was not thrown away: these poor mountaineers have a love of brightness almost unknown among English

peasants; they were proud of her beauty and rejoiced in its adornment; she was the brightest vision in their lives, and often some ragged creature would go out of his way for the mere pleasure of meeting her as she passed along the road.

She had all the qualities to endear her to these people: beauty, friendliness combined with a certain queenliness, generosity, and fun. Since her childhood she had been a familiar visitor in their cottages, and she had done much to make their lives happier.

Ballyvonaire Castle was the "great house" of that part of the country; it was her mother's property, and had been celebrated for its hospitality in her grandfather's time. Mr. Chillington was an Englishman. He was in the diplomatic service, and his duties took him to the East. He and his wife were good friends, but nothing more; it was acceptable to both that she should remain in Ireland while he was abroad. When at home he spent little of his time at Ballyvonaire; he stayed in London chiefly, and at such times he delighted to have his eldest daughter with him; he was fond of her, and she did him credit. Occasionally, during his absence, she visited at Somerford and other English houses. She was now on the eve of departing on one of these excursions, and her present drive had the express object of meeting the Glengariff coach, and transferring therefrom to her cart a box containing a travelling-dress and other garments which Dublin was sending to her; for, although none knew better than she the

attractions of the shops of London and Paris, patriotism compelled her to make her purchases at home.

By natural sequence her thoughts went from the travelling-dress to the journey, from the journey to its goal. The prospect of showing herself in society again for a little while was pleasant. Here in her own country she was a queen; she was accustomed to the position, but the admiration of English gentlemen had a distinct charm. She assured herself that it would be impossible for her ever to marry an Englishman; but, at the same time, she sometimes half admitted that the young men she was in the habit of meeting at home would have been pleasanter companions if they had borne more resemblance in some points of detail to the oppressors. She felt the want of society more intellectually cultivated than her own wild home could provide; yet it was as agreeable companions for a holiday, pleasant products of civilisation, hot-house plants almost, that she thought of the others, — not to be dreamt of as lovers. She was a difficult young lady to provide for matrimonially. Her contempt for the bonds of common-place marriage was great; it was not sufficient for her that a man should approve of her person, and be able to offer her a comfortable home. She must be won differently. She looked for a mate who both loved his country and had strength to prove it. Probably she would have desired the heroism of a Grenville, the public position of a Daniel O'Connell, and the patriotic ideal of a Mazzini combined in one Irishman.

Heroism captivated her. She had once told a friend with a turn for matchmaking that she would rather have been Lord Nelson's mistress than his master's queen, but this as much with a desire to shock as from conviction.

The sincerity of her indifference to what is called making a good match was proved by her having refused several opportunities of so doing. There was but one man with whom she had allowed her fancies to play when she had thought of marriage — a poor and brave man known in those parts as O'Connor of the Hills, — but the love of Ireland and desire to serve the same cause was the only bond between them.

Her thoughts came back from her destiny to her dress as she reached the summit of a long hill and saw the coach a mile below making the toilsome ascent. Some of the passengers had descended, and were walking in front of the coach. They all looked at her as they passed with more or less surprise: they had expected to see mountains and picturesque rags, but nothing of this sort. One among them afterwards, in his own country, spoke with the confidence of experience on the beauty of Irish maidens. Another gentleman, connected with the English press, who was collecting notes for an article, afterwards stirred the indignation of a manufacturing town by the statement that "side by side with the half-starved tenant and the shivering, barefooted peasant, the daughter of the landlord might be seen

clothed in fine raiment gained by extorting the uttermost farthing from the hapless sons of the soil."

Elsinora, in her turn, scrutinised each as he passed with interest, and presently she opened her eyes wide as she caught sight of a tall, sunburnt young man, who was coming along leisurely a little way behind the rest of the walkers. She recognised him in an instant.

"Mr. Malory!" she cried, as he came up; "I believe you did not know me, and were going to pass."

A discontented expression vanished from Dick's face; it caught instant brightness from hers; he flushed with surprise and pleasure.

"I knew I was in your part of the country, Miss Chillington, but I never dreamt of meeting you."

"And if we hadn't met, do you tell me you would have left without paying me a visit? That would have been the second time we should have been in the same place without renewing acquaintance. But tell me now where are you going, and where's the donkey? Well, I often wondered when we should meet again, and — don't be offended — I have always thought of that charming donkey when I thought of you. But I ought not to ask you where you are going; you are coming to see us; you are accepting my invitation of long ago at Somerford to come and see my country, and pay us a visit. Am I not right now?"

"No! quite wrong. I've been away from England for two years in America, a sort of cowboy, and on the

way home I made some friends who wanted to see Killarney, so I came with them from Queenstown, and they're at Killarney still, and I'm going home for a visit."

"Ah, no! after two years a few days will make no difference; you must come and stay with us. I want to show you the country myself, and I want to hear about some old friends. You will come now? We will get your portmanteau out of the coach and put it into my cart, and I can drive you home."

Miss Chillington had a large degree of the hospitality of her race, but if she had not found something personally attractive in Malory it is doubtful whether she would have exercised it so promptly as now. She settled the matter when they reached the coach by giving directions to the guard for the transfer of his portmanteau. "And you'll have a parcel for me, Owen," she said to the driver. "Ah! there it is. And how are the horses?"

"Wisha, then," the driver answered, "the poor bastes' hearts is broke wid carryin' English towerists. 'Deed they seemed to know they had a parcel behind them belonging to your ladyship this day, the way they stepped along. And 'tis yourself looks well, Miss, glory be to God!"

"Why," said Dick to Elsinora as they drove off, "the old hypocrite told us in the coach that these troubled times were the mischief, in driving away the English quality, who brought the money into the country, God bless them! — "

"Did he, now? Owen always has, as they say, the 'pleasant word' for every one. It means half-crowns with him. I believe he takes special delight in misleading the inquiring Saxon who comes over to get up the Irish question in a fortnight. You must tell me all your adventures. How strange it is in meeting people after years when you have lost sight of them, to remember that they have been with themselves all the time! The same to themselves, but a new person to you — changed, married. You are not married, are you?"

"No," said Dick, wincing, "of course not. Are you, Miss Chillington?"

"You seem to have made up your mind about it by calling me Miss Chillington. And pray why? Do you think I look unbroken still, then?"

"I won't tell you how I think you look," he said, with animation, "or you might say I had picked up already your countrymen's habit of having 'the pleasant word' ready. Well, this is a wonderful expedition. To think of my good luck in finding myself driving away in an unknown region with you, instead of sitting with my fellow-tourists on a coach and afterwards dining with them at a hotel."

His spirits rose higher every minute; the exhilaration of driving among the mountains at the side of this beautiful girl, and the novelty of the situation, made him forget his burden; the scenery, which from the coach top had looked but picturesque, now became full of beauty and suggestiveness; he began

to feel the charm of the wild mountains and the romance of the unknown before him.

The road ran through a pass; a swollen, peat-stained river flowed among the rocks; not a tree or shrub grew near, not a cottage was visible; an eagle, motionless, far up above purple crags, was the only living thing to be seen; on a spur of rock at the end of the pass the ruins of a small castle added to the desolation. "That is the old home of The O'Connor of the Hills," said Elsinora; "they were great chieftains in the land once. You may fancy that the men who lived in a place like that were made rather differently from the men we meet to-day, and that their descendants, although they may be ruined and disinherited, feel little inclination to be ruled by English tradesmen."

"Old-fashioned English gentlemen don't care about it either," said Dick; "we must accept the changed conditions, I suppose."

"Oh, but the causes are different," said Elsinora, unwilling to part with a special Irish grievance; "recklessness and unwise hospitality may have helped to ruin our old families, but they have had disadvantages which are unknown in England. You know that the penal laws made anything but failure almost impossible to Irish Catholics. I expect you know the story quite well, but perhaps you do not know the ridiculous and irritating forms the oppression sometimes took. Why, can you believe it, that if it were a hundred and fifty years ago you could

compel me to sell you my cob for the sum of five pounds, — just because you are a Protestant and I am a Catholic?"

"That must have been a heavenly time for the English horse-dealers," said Dick. "The grievances have been outrageous, but now they are removed is it not best to forget them? The English Non-conformists could also tell a tale of religious oppression; even the Jews have settled down."

"Ah, don't be comparing us with Jews and Methodists!" cried Elsinora, with indignation; but as she looked at Dick, his smile was so pleasant to her that she made instant peace. Personal appearance counted for very much with her.

They had reached the end of the pass, and looked down into a broad valley which lay at right angles to it. Eastward, the glens ran for miles into the mountains; westward, the valley sloped towards the sea, and far down to the left a little blue inlet of ocean lay like a lake under the purple sides of a further range. The barren pass behind them looked dark, as though twilight had fallen, and the castle of the O'Connors stood out black as night against the sombre rocks.

The splendour of light and colour which now greeted them surprised even Elsinora, accustomed as she was to the rapid changes of the region. The sky in the west had cleared; in the valley below a great shower was moving slowly upwards towards the glens in the east, and a rainbow shone with

intense hues against the dark background of the mountains. Westward, the valley was filled with sunshine; a hundred rills flashed among the rocks; tracts of vivid green pasture fringed the river along the bottom of the valley; little loughs brought the brightness of the sky down into the dark peat land; the summits of the mountains on all sides caught the glow of the evening sun; masses of furze bloom shone among the heather, and all the variety of young leafage mingled in the belt of woods which grew round the margin of the sea inlet.

Elsinora drew up for a minute. She saw her companion's surprised admiration, and found even more pleasure in it than in the scene itself.

"We are proud of our scenery, just as you are of your fast trains and your Manchesters," said she, slyly.

"I see you are, Miss Chillington, and you are quite right; though every one who loves nature has an equal claim to be proud of your mountains, wherever he comes from; but Englishmen alone may be proud of their Manchesters because they made them."

"Well, they may be proud of them, and welcome. I know you are not serious; but I really don't think many Englishmen care about wild scenery. They like the well-kept park and the gently-flowing river, the meadow and the copse. Yes, these they love; the mountains they respect. Our mountain scenery looks either very old or very young; English

scenery seems to me to be always in the prime of life."

"Poor England!" Dick laughed, "you are being treated very contemptuously. You know, Miss Chillington, I remember a good deal that you said about Ireland to Mr. Tristram at Somerford. You almost made me a Nationalist at the time."

"And I think you promised," said Elsinora, "that you would take the first opportunity of coming over to Ireland to see for yourself."

"And here I am."

"Yes, after six years — perfectly indifferent."

"No, not a bit, only it seemed to me that England was in even a worse way than Ireland."

"Oh, we'll have a great talk about it before you go, Mr. Malory. I long for a good talk about these things."

"And I," said Dick. "I am ready to listen and talk and sympathise to any extent, and I believe I love Ireland already."

They had now reached the bottom of the valley. Little farms of a few fields began to appear on the lower slopes of the mountains. On the roadside were cottages of the poorest description. Some of them were without windows, for the small hole which the architect had provided for purposes of fenestration had either lost its original pane of glass, or had been deprived of it and stuffed up with straw by the inhabitants, while some of them were without chimneys, an opening in the roof above the fire serv-

ing to take away some of the peat smoke. In front of nearly all these cabins was a little pond of muddy water, known as the "lough," on the banks of which lay the pigs where the householder was in easy circumstances. A few fowls, whose roost was within the house, were generally collected about the door, and in addition to these possessions some could count a goat or two, to be seen on the rock behind. At the end of the valley the road turned towards the sea and led through more fertile ways. A little village came in view at a meeting of the roads, and beyond it the wooded slope of Ballyvonaire and a glimpse of the sea inlet.

"We are getting near home now," said Elsinora. "This is our village — not much like an English village, is it? Now don't be troubling yourself to defend the English village. I have not a word against it; I wish ours were a little more like one. That dreary-looking house up there in the fir plantation is Mr. O'Connor's. By the way, would you care to see an eviction? It is a sad sight, but it may do more than anything I can say to make you realise something of our sorrows. Mr. O'Connor, I think, is arranging, in this case, to move the family to his own farm, and I promised him to drive over to-morrow in case I should be of use."

"I should like it. Is there any chance of a row?" he asked.

"I am afraid there is. Here comes a great chum of mine; we must stop and introduce you."

A child of five or six years of age came running along the road. He was bare-legged and bare-headed, a mass of tangled fair hair almost hid his forehead, his eyes were of the deepest blue, his only clothing was a scarlet frock, and in his right hand he had a long stick.

"Good evening, Danny," said Elsinora, drawing up.

"Good evening to your honour, Miss," said the child, rather shyly.

"And how's your mother, Danny?"

"Illigant, Miss."

"And how's Daveen?"

"Illigant, Miss."

"And the baby; tell me, how's the baby?"

"Illigant, Miss."

"And how's the pig getting on?"

"Illigant, Miss."

"Now, Danny — don't laugh, Mr. Malory, Danny will think you are laughing at him, and he is very proud, — run across the screen field, like a good boy, as quick as you can, and tell Tom Condon that some of the sheep have got into Mr. Duggan's corn." And the wild-looking little creature was over the wall and off at full speed in a second.

They were greeted immediately afterwards by an old man, who came to Miss Chillington's side as she drew up, longing to shake hands, but conscious of the rashness of such a desire, with:

"Just give me two fingers, your honour, for the love o' God."

She gave him her hand; she was not displeased that her companion should see her popularity.

At the cross roads, where the village stood, they met O'Connor, who was standing beside his horse at one of the cottage doors. He was a strongly-built, fine-looking man, about thirty years of age, with dark hair, dark attractive eyes, and sunburnt skin. In his face the expressions were marked and subject to rapid change; the constant shadow of a frown hung over his brows, but when it cleared it set free a generous smile. There was little in his dress to distinguish him from the farmers and squireens of the neighbourhood, but his bearing had a natural dignity which the science of old Gough, the wandering tailor of those parts, was powerless to injure.

As he came forward to meet Miss Chillington, leading his horse, every cabin door around contributed eyes curious to see the stranger, and ears ready to catch any scrap of the conversation which might reach them.

"Whisht, woman, till I hear what he says; 'tis English he is," whispered one in the little shebeen shop.

"Mr. O'Connor, let me introduce Mr. Malory," said Elsinora, "one of our English friends, — a sympathiser, I think I may say. May I not, Mr. Malory?"

"Yes," said Dick, bowing to O'Connor.

"A what's this she says he is?" asked a voice behind the scenes, — "a shrympathiser?"

"'Tis a term in the law, ma'am," replied a man's voice; "it manes a councillor, divil a less, and 'tis too fond she is o' the English to plaze me, Mrs. Casey."

"Bad manners to you, Johnny Deleuchry, to be sayin' who she'll be fond of and who she'll mislike. Phaix, the O'Connor give him cowld look, any way."

O'Connor fully shared Johnny Deleuchry's objection to Miss Chillington's English connections, and the look with which he greeted Dick was hardly one of welcome, though his manner was courteous enough.

"Our English friends are so few that they are doubly welcome to Ireland," he said.

"I saw your old castle coming through the glen," said Dick. "I was much struck by it and the wild surroundings."

"A ruined house is usually a more picturesque object to a visitor than to the owner," O'Connor replied, and, turning to Miss Chillington to speak of the next day, he took no further notice of his presence.

"'Tis talking of the eviction they are," said the woman at the shop door; "phaix, I believe the English gintleman is come over to get the rights of it, and put it all out on the paper, and that's just what they mane by a shrympathiser, not a councillor at all. Aren't I right now, Mr. Henessy?" as another man entered.

"I don't say but you are, ma'am," said Mr. Henessy, cautiously.

"Make your own thranslation, as you're so cliver," said Johnny Deleuchry, much offended.

"'Tis all settled for to-morrow," said the newcomer. "They'll have old Tim turned out before the morning's over; he's making ready for a fight, and one or two o' the boys is going in to help him. They say there's twenty-five o' the constabulary coming down along with that schaming villain of agint, and a batthery of soldiers ready at Kenmare to folly over if there's throuble."

"The Lord save us and keep us from harm!—all over poor old Tim Callaghan."

"And if he'd had his own way 'twould be settled now, for he towld me himself he'd been schaming a plan, and over he wint to young Phin Burke, a smart lad wid a good bit saved, and Phin, says he, 'there's my gerrel Pawdeen, a good gerrel, and cliver wid the butther and the calves, though she have only fifteen years,' says he, 'and she don't mislike you, Phin, for that matther. Pay the arrears, Phin, 'tis only forty pounds, and marry the gerrel by Monday morning, and the farm's yours, wid the condition that I stay on in the owld place along wid ye.' And Phin was agreeable, sure enough, but the O'Connor and Miss Nora, they just heard what was doing and sthopped it, for Miss Nora she says 'twas nothin but shameful to be marrying Pawdeen, and she only fifteen, a young slip of a thing; but, begorra,

'twill be the death o' Tim to lave the owld place, and may the divil take —"

"They're afther spaking o' that very same thing this moment," said the woman at the door; "and sure the shrympathiser's laughin' like a furrin' cockatoo, bad manners to him!"

Not only Dick, but Elsinora and O'Connor also, had laughed heartily at Tim Callaghan's scheme for paying his rent. O'Connor had been equally opposed to it — not on account of the girl's age nor the enormity of her being, possibly, forced into marriage against her will, — but because he did not wish the rent to be paid at all. He had no wish to see any compromise with the landlords, and used all his power to develop the present hostile relationship. He gave Elsinora particulars of what was likely to take place next day, and told her he had arranged to put the evicted tenant into a cottage of his own for the time being; a cart would be in readiness to convey him and any belongings he could collect to his new abode after he was turned out. Elsinora praised his thoughtfulness with a warmth which brought the colour to O'Connor's face, and also consented to allow him to drive her to the scene next day.

"A generous friend, but an ungenerous enemy," thought Dick of O'Connor as they left.

"A damned superior Englishman," thought O'Connor of Dick, "who comes over here pretending to take an interest in us because he wants to stand

well with Miss Chillington. I wish to God he and the like of him would stay at home among their drawing-room pheasants and not come talking to us about our picturesque ruins."

"Did ye see the wild osthrich feathers in Miss Nora's hat," said Johnny Deleuchry; "they must have cost a mint."

"And why not," said Mrs. Casey. "If they was osthrich feathers, or paycock's feathers, or pelican's feathers itself, they wouldn't be good enough for her, begorra!"

"Well, well," said another, "the smile of her eyes is good luck for the rest of the day, God bless her!"

## CHAPTER II.

### A MOONLIGHT DANCE.

THE candles were lighted on the dining-room table at Ballyvonaire, but the brightness of the sunset had not yet left the sky. The air which came through the open windows had the gentle touch of the south-west. The dark green firs on the hill-top in the park stood clear against a wild-rose sky, and beyond were glimpses of darkening mountains. Faint sounds of the sea came mingled with the hush of wind in the fir tops. It was the first evening of summer.

Dick and Elsinora were alone at the table. Mrs. Chillington had received a message in the afternoon from her youngest son, who was a midshipman, saying that he and his ship would be on view next day at Beerhaven; and she had at once set off with her daughter Caroline to the house of some friends who lived at Castletown, hard by, to win this glimpse of her best beloved. The other boy was at Sandhurst, so there was no one at home.

Elsinora was disappointed; she feared her guest might have pictured a gay party, and she desired that he should have a good first impression of a hospitable Irish house; but she promised him that the pres-

ent dulness should be atoned for before he left. It was he who was embarrassed; he felt he ought at least to offer not to remain. She perhaps fancied something of the kind was in his mind, and wished to reassure him when she said she hoped he could bear the solitude for one night, as there was no chance of escape for him, and no other shelter within ten miles; conventional scruples were unknown to her.

"It would be a curious comment," Dick was saying, "on the stories you hear in England of the danger of residence in Ireland that you have no fear of being left here quite alone in this remote place."

Elsinora laughed. "At the time of the last Fenian disturbance they sent a little captain down from the barracks to see my mother. We did not know him nor he us, and he assumed the part of one of our defenders. The message he brought was a kind one, but it did not please my mother; it was an offer to send a detachment of soldiers here to protect us in case of attack. 'Tell the Colonel I'm much obliged to him,' said my mother, 'but I hope it may not be necessary for us to come over to protect your soldiers.' And I have a brother at Sandhurst," she added; "I suppose you think that shockingly inconsistent."

"Well, you would not like to see him helping at an eviction."

"Fancy his daring to do so; he'd send in his resignation first; but I love soldiers. I don't see why a

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good Irishman should not serve in the army; it is British, not English." She was perhaps conscious of a weak case, as she seemed anxious to avoid pursuing the subject. "Tell me of Mr. Longfield," she diverged; "he was all eagerness to find an enemy when I saw him last."

"I expect he is as keen as ever, but I have heard nothing of him while I have been abroad," Dick said. "I should like to see a fellow like him fighting in some great cause. Our army has become a branch of the police; we have no cause but our commercial interests, but I believe fighting is good for its own sake. Tom and I would never allow as boys that he who ruled his spirit was greater than he who took a city."

"He is certainly not so interesting to his fellow-creatures, especially to women," replied Elsinora. "And so many of the people who do succeed in ruling their spirits are disappointing because their kingdoms are so small. I think you will like that claret, Mr. Malory, though we have no gentleman in the house. My great-grandfather was particular on account of his French friends," she explained; "officers of Hoche have dined in this room."

"I don't wonder that you're a rebel, Miss Chillington."

"A rebel? Well I suppose it is much easier to be fond of Ireland than of England. England does not ask for love. Englishmen like to think themselves cosmopolitans; patriotism is insular."

"Where an Englishman's treasure is, there shall his heart be also," said Dick. "He has great treasure in foreign securities."

"Indeed now, you look gloomy directly you speak of England, and yet you will not allow me to say anything against England. You don't really love your country a bit, and you're jealous because I love mine."

"No," said Dick, earnestly; "it's because I love my country that I am unhappy when I think of its condition."

"England's condition is like that of my countryman at the fair who said he was blue mouldy for want of a bating."

"Oh, we don't intend to be beaten."

Elsinora laughed merrily. "It's impossible to satisfy you."

Every time Dick looked at his hostess his admiration increased — some fresh charm attracted him. He noticed that her brown hair was wavy over the temples, and had golden touches at her neck and about her ears. He could not tell the colour of her eyes; they had looked blue in the sunshine, now they were darkest gray; and her nose had just that suspicion of departure from the perfect straight to the retroussé which gave to her face the same piquancy which her slight Irish accent gave to her speech. He caught the laughter from her eyes, and forgot England to remember it again affectionately when she asked him something about his home.

"I wish I could show you our old-fashioned coun-

try life; I know you would like it. Next time you are in England you will come. My uncles live in a ruin; but you will like it. Will you come?"

"Indeed I might."

"It is not much like the English houses you know —not like Somerford. One of my uncles spends part of the day in his workshop and part on the roof, keeping the ruins in order; you would love him in five minutes. You would find the other seated in the warmest corner of the garden with a large straw hat or a rhubarb leaf on his head, reading Greek, smoking an enormous pipe, and smiling. He is a philosopher and never makes a serious remark."

"I am longing to know him."

"And then there is my sister Nan and her governess, Miss Jenkins of Salisbury, and Voweraker, who is the out-door staff."

"Voweraker," she laughed. "I must know Voweraker. How old is your sister?"

"Sixteen, I think. And the Longfields are close by; theirs is one of those real old-fashioned country houses."

"I have heard of Miss Margaret Longfield. I suppose from her brother or the Dandos. She is pretty, is she not?"

"Oh yes, quite."

"And young?"

"Twenty-three."

"That is my age too. What secrets we are letting out. I really must not be asking you any

more questions. What do you say to a stroll presently? You have not seen the view on the sea side of the house, and you may smoke, of course."

"I can picture nothing more delightful," Dick answered.

"Then I will send you in some coffee at once, and be ready for you in a quarter of an hour."

Dick was very thoughtful after Elsinora left him. Two years of rough life had restored some of the healthiness to his mind. He had failed at the outset, but he did not consider himself beaten; he was returning home determined to make another fight against the world from which he had fled. Strong had not written, and he had heard nothing of Connie; he had tried to put her out of his thoughts, and with some success. He was debarred from marriage on her account, but perhaps that was no great evil, so he had consoled himself. But now! Miss Chillington had led his thoughts into wonderland. Everything in the world hitherto had been disappointing — less beautiful than his hopes. Now at last the world had shown him something more beautiful than his dreams. Here, close at hand, and yet worlds away, was a girl in whose smile the whole earth was born again for him. And the more he thought of her the more the remembrance of Connie and of his marriage was thrust upon him. He began to feel intense desire to know what had become of Connie, whether she had returned to Strong, whether there was any chance of his snapping his bonds with

her. And this girl of girls with whom he was to have the joy of spending the long evening alone! She was perhaps expecting him now; he would think of nothing but the present.

He found her waiting for him on the doorstep in cloak and hood. The twilight was fading and the moon was in the south. It was almost dark in the shrubbery walks through which they passed; the wind had died away; the tree tops scarcely stirred; the place had a feeling of far inland seclusion.

"I think I have a surprise for you," said Elsinora, as they came to the end of the wooded walk.

Suddenly the whole scene changed. Almost at their feet, rippling up against grassy shores, was the sea — an inlet calm as a lake; and away westward, touched by the last pale gold of the daylight and the first pale silver of the moonlight, far horizons of the Atlantic.

The exhibitor of a scene to one who is looking on it for the first time sees it with new eyes, and he who looks may enfold it in his companion's individuality. To Elsinora the place looked almost strange; to Dick it grew half familiar in picturing her memories of it. His thoughts were so much occupied with her that he was not quick enough to her liking in expressing his admiration of the scene.

"Well," she asked, "have you no praise for us?"

"I am steadily soaking it in," he replied. "I expect I shall praise it all the rest of my life."

"You are not smoking. I wish you would; I like it in the open air."

Dick lighted a cigar, and the scene grew still more beautiful to him.

"Now," she said, "suppose we stroll a little way along the shore. Bantry Bay is beyond that dark range; the highest point is Hungry Mountain; we must have a climb to-morrow for a view of the coast."

"You and I?"

He said it so enthusiastically that she expressed her regret that her sister would not be at home before the evening. Then she remembered that the eviction was to take place next day.

"Well, the day after we'll have an expedition," she said.

"Oh, I shall have to be off really, Miss Chillington."

"Not at all. I told you my mother never lets any one go under a week — it is a tradition, — and we have so much to talk of, and I am bent on making you a convert. I don't mean a Catholic."

"Why not?" said Dick, "I have an open mind."

"Oh, but that means you are indifferent. I never knew any one who had an open mind about anything unless he was indifferent. Indifference provokes me beyond everything. Englishmen are very provoking."

"Irish ladies are very severe."

"Englishmen are indifferent when they should be enthusiastic, gay when they should be serious, solemn when they should be gay; patriotism, nobility

of any kind, is a subject for laughter; but over newspaper gossip they are solemn, oh, so solemn. At festivities they've hardly a smile."

"Irish ladies can make a bad cause look a good one because it is theirs; they can make treason look as beautiful as patriotism; they can make intolerance look like a virtue, and unjust reproaches sound —"

Elsinora laughed. "I will not hear another word. How funny it is that we should be here talking together so frankly considering we are almost strangers! You will have to tell me something more about yourself," she continued. "There are certain questions, are there not, which you ask a new boy at school? What is his father? Where does he live? How much pocket-money has he? What is he going to be? I must put you through some such examination."

"I can soon answer," replied Dick. "I am twenty-five years old; I have no pocket-money; I live nowhere in particular; I was a sculptor, but I have given it up; I have not much faith in this world, and none at all in any other. My father and mother are dead." Some sudden impulse had made him blurt out this bald confession. She looked at him, startled.

"You don't really mean all that, Mr. Malory?"

"No, I put it very stupidly," he answered, trying to laugh off what he had said, and somewhat ashamed of having brought himself so much to the

front; but she knew he had been in earnest, and was interested.

A cottage at the water-side stood out white in the moonlight in front of them. Elsinora turned off the path and knocked at the door.

"I will introduce you to some retainers of mine," she said, — "my chief fiddler and my head dancer."

A very old man came to the door; he was dressed in the garments of a past generation of Irish peasants, — the knee-breeches and long tail coat now seldom seen; his face became radiant when he saw Elsinora; he turned his head with triumph.

"Dan, me boy," he said, "that's twysht I was before ye."

Immediately another old man, exactly like him, came forward.

"'Deed," said he, "I knew your honour's sthep, but Thady was sthanding o-possit the door when your honour knocked. Will I make bould to ax you to come inside, Miss?"

Dick looked in, but could see nothing but the red glow of peats through a dense atmosphere of smoke.

"Where's your manners, Dan," said Thady, "to be laving out the gintleman in your axing?"

"Thank you," said Dick; "I've heard about you; you are the great fiddler."

Thady swelled with triumph. "Thank you kindly, sir," he said, "you're welcome to Ballyvonaire. Did ye hear that," he whispered to Dan, "he heard tell of my fiddling — divil a word o' the dancin'."

"And I am also very glad to make the acquaintance of a celebrated step dancer," said Dick to the other brother.

"Thank your honour, and 'tis proud I am of those words," said Dan. "You can be kwite afther that," he added to Thady.

"We can't come in to-night," said Elsinora, "but I want you both to come round to the house to-morrow evening at eight o'clock, and bring your fiddle with you, Thady, and bring all your steps with you, Dan; for we'll have dancing in the barn, and this is an English gentleman who is a good friend of the old country, and we want to show him a little fun before he goes home."

"Oh, then, he's welcome to Ireland; long life to him," said Thady.

"And a fine sphlendid gentleman he is too, God bless him," said Dan; "and 'tis an illigant couple ye make there, sthanding in the moonlight."

"Will I give your honour a chune now?" Thady asked.

"Do, Thady."

"And a half-dozen stheps?" asked Dan.

"If you please, Dan, out here."

Dan, with an agility for so old a man which completely astonished Dick, took the cabin door off its hinges and laid it on the ground outside. Thady got out his fiddle.

"Will it be 'Paddy O'Rafferty' or 'The Walls o' Liscarrol,' Miss?"

"'Paddy O'Rafferty'; it's a great favourite of mine," replied Elsinora.

Thady commenced to play and Dan to dance on the door; his steps were fewer than in past days, but for an old man his performance was a triumph. Thady's excitement grew, and his time became quicker, but Dan was equal to the occasion; his blood, too, was up; he felt his youth renewed; he danced bravely, with stiff knees and pliant ankles. Dick laughed and applauded boisterously.

"Well done," said Elsinora, and with a sudden freak, "Dan, I'll dance a step with you myself."

The old man ran in great excitement to a shed at the back of the house, and came back with another door, which he laid down in front of the first, to give more room.

"It's a pleasure to dance with a man who can step like you, Dan."

"D'ye hear that, Thady?" cried Dan.

"Your music would make any one dance, Thady."

"And d'ye hear that, Dan? 'The Walls o' Liscarrol,' Miss?"

Elsinora drew up her skirts a little and commenced dancing opposite the old man. She left out a good many steps, but she threw her head back and moved daintily to the fiddling. At the proper place she and Dan crossed and danced on opposite sides. The scarlet hood had fallen back from her head; the bright moonlight shone on her happy face; the couple made a strange picture.

"Now," said she, when the dance was finished, "we must be going. Mind, Thady and Dan, this is a secret; it would never do to tell every one about my dancing out here."

"Not a word of it, your honour."

"Not a whishper, Miss Nora."

But she knew very well it would be all over Ballyvonaire next day.

"To-morrow night, then, you'll remember to come at eight o'clock."

As they left they could hear the brothers disputing.

"Her honour said it was a thrate to dance wid a man like me," said Dan.

"'And any one could dance to music the like o' yours, Thady,' she says."

And so their emulation continued long after they were out of hearing.

"Well, now, Mr. Malory," said Elsinora, "I suppose you think I'm a very ridiculous person. Fancy a well-behaved English girl dancing on a door at night with an old man of seventy."

"It was enchanting," said Dick, enthusiastically. "Miss Chillington, I am in love with everything I have seen since I came to Ireland. I am bewitched."

They turned back towards the house.

"Hark," said Elsinora, "at the curlews calling, and look at those white clouds high up, how rapidly they are flying. Though it is so still here, there

must be a strong wind blowing at sea. That moonlit water looks like a lake; but tell me now, is it not twice as beautiful when you remember it is part of the great ocean? That island that looks so black beyond the strip of bright water is the Island of Clogheen.[1] You will see it brilliant to-morrow in the sunshine,—heather and furze bloom, and dark green holly, and red hawthorn blossom, and golden sea-weed, and purple rock. There is a little ruined chapel on it, and a burial-ground which is sometimes used still; and there is a pretty legend about the saint who lived there, which I will tell you before you go, and another story about the Glen of the Seven Whispers, which is on the shore opposite the island. You see I am like Sherezade, and try to keep you here by piquing your curiosity," and for no apparent reason she blushed under her hood.

"Miss Chillington," said Dick, "I wish to correct a statement which I made just now. It is true I am twenty-five years old, and have no pocket-money, and live nowhere in particular; but I shall not give up my profession, I shall not go abroad, and I have faith in the world and hope for the future."

[1] Clogheen, a burial-ground; pronounced Clo'heen.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE ACCIDENT.

VERY early next morning Elsinora went out to bathe in the river. Her head was bare, for she never wore a hat when it was possible to avoid doing so, and she never caught colds. She had on stout boots, and towels were over her arm, but she walked as a young princess should walk and does not, and as the peasant girl of her country does walk. There was great talking of rooks above the elms in the avenue; out in the dewy fields an uneasy lowing of cows awaiting the coming of the milkmaids; farther off over the moorland the lapwings were calling, but there was no sight or sound of human beings. Elsinora had the world to herself.

When she had walked a mile across the moorland she reached the deep pool in the river, which was her bathing-place, and took a look round to assure herself that she was far away from every one. The banks were high enough at this point to give her a long view; but she had no need to take precautions; she would have been safe from intrusion here at any time of the day. Then she undressed, took a last look round, and dived off the bank. She delighted

in swimming; her limbs were untrammelled by any bathing-dress; she revelled in the cold mountain water that flowed so clearly through the banks of rushes and forget-me-nots. When she came out she almost laughed with joy of the glow and freshness and exhilaration. She walked home with a fine appetite for breakfast, and a relish in the thought of the comradeship that awaited her. She had forgotten the eviction and the sorrows of her country. At the mouth of a little brook which ran to the river she picked a bunch of watercresses, and from the high bank gay with crab-apple blossoms she broke a branch for the decoration of her table, an unusual thing, for she seldom picked flowers. "But this," she said, apologising to them, "will save you from turning into sour little crabs."

The stir of the day's work had begun before she returned. Six milkmaids in single file, each dressed in a blue homespun petticoat, each with an empty wooden milk-pail on her head, passed her in the avenue, and "Good morrow to your honour, Miss," or "Good morrow, Miss Nora," said they, and "Good morrow kindly," she answered. She crossed the farmyard to the dairy, in which she took special interest, and went in. Everything was as it should be; the mud floor clean, the rows of empty keelers spotless. She looked critically at the standing milk and the new butter, and exchanged greetings with the dairy-woman.

"I'll be relying on your keeping the butter up to

the mark while I'm away, Mrs. Twomey," said she; "you'll remember the honour of the dairy."

"'Deed I will, Miss."

"And no fear of my hearing they marked us 'thirds' again at Cork market, like they did the last time I was away," she laughed.

"Wisha, don't spake of it, Miss; 'twas the way two churnings got mixed in one firkin, and the two colours defated us, and they just condimned the lot."

"Tell the girls there'll be dancing to-night in the big barn."

As she was entering the house she saw one of O'Connor's men.

"Well, Pat," she said, "you have a message."

"I have, Miss. The O'Connor said he'd be over at onest, for 'tis the way that the viction's poshponed to an airlier hour than 'twas fixhed."

"All right, Pat, I'll be ready. 'Tis a fine morning."

"'Tis a fine day, then, glory be to God," said Pat.

Elsinora had finished breakfast, and was on the point of starting when Dick appeared. He had been awake half the night, thinking of her and of his own sorry fortunes. Imagination had then brought her close, and he had indulged in fervent speech; now she was far away again, and he spoke of the weather. Elsinora said she would ask Father Daly to call for him if he cared to see the eviction, and drove off with O'Connor, leaving him thoroughly discontented.

Few women find a joy in life for its own sake; more than men they would have a purpose in their lives; they must have a sphere of usefulness though it be of the humblest. And modern girls with brains are not satisfied with the promise of this sphere in mere helpmatehood, in the ambition of refreshing the husband after his day's work with spousal smiles. They would achieve it independently, almost aggressively.

Elsinora was hardly of these. She enjoyed life for its own sake at every breath, but it had a great purpose for her also. She combined much that was old-fashioned in her idea of a woman's sphere with a hatred of the injustice with which she considered her weaker sisters were treated by men and the world. Ireland she saw as a woman in hated bonds, the outrages which had been committed in the land as the mean strivings of a woman powerless to escape. Her warmest sympathy was for her unfortunate fellow-women, her greatest ambition to be of service to her country.

She and O'Connor fell speedily into conversation on the theme which united them.

"This is poor fighting," she said, referring to the eviction.

"We do our best," said he.

"Do we? Are we getting any further? Is our strength growing more solid? What is our goal? Are we on the right track?"

"Faith, I doubt it. You look to England, Miss

Chillington, and reform; and we are knocked about like a bandy ball between the two parties."

"And what can we do?"

"Fight for ourselves. We don't want English rule, good or bad. When we have been made to suffer tyranny, we don't want the tyrants to reform and treat us better. I don't care if the master is good or bad; we want no master. I hate them more with their reforms than with their whips. Soft speeches don't wipe out the remembrance of old lashes. By the powers, I would have the country roused till every man was ready to die. But I know you are against violence," he added, restraining himself.

"Oh, for a leader!" said Elsinora.

"England treats Ireland as if she were a charity girl," continued O'Connor, "and our leaders are to blame. Let them stay at home and organise the country; we must wait and stand together and rise at one time, and 'tis preparing for this we ought to be instead of fiddle-faddling with land acts. If we refused to go wrangling at Westminster, but stayed at home and worked and kept our mouths shut, and let England see we were determined, there would be no need of violence. We'd show our right to be free. And we want more influence like your own. There isn't a man on this side of the country but would rise if you gave him the word, and there isn't a man of them would do a murder in the cause he knew was yours."

O'Connor spoke sincerely, with no intention of flattery. Elsinora shook her head, but she was not unmoved by his words. He named an eminent member of the Nationalist party who was to be his guest the following week, and asked her if she would meet him and confer; but before she answered a sudden thought had darkened his brow, and he added, "But you are going to England."

"Yes; next week."

"Is this Englishman a real friend of the country?"

"I am not sure, but he is a friend of mine," said Elsinora.

"Faith, you trust England and the English too much! So you are going away again. Indeed, it's a lonely place when you are out of it."

"I'll soon be back. You'll go on working. My hopes are yours."

"Truly?"

"Truly! you know it. Your cause is mine."

"I love the country," said O'Connor, flushing; "but I love you better. If I love Ireland well, 'tis for your sake. If you care at all for me, 'tis for the sake of Ireland. And you are going away from me. Tell me before you go — tell me now — is there a chance for me that you'll ever love me for myself some day, if I do anything worth doing for Ireland and you?"

Elsinora had often thought that this question might one day be put to her, and she had never been sure how she would answer it. But now she had

not the slightest hesitation. She denied him the hope he asked in the kindest words she could summon.

"Then promise me this," he said, excitedly, "that you'll never marry an Englishman."

"I can make you no promise," she said.

"By the Lord, then, I know the reason!"

A jealous suspicion maddened him. He gave his horse the novel experience of a violent cut with the whip.

Wild plunging followed, then further castigation and flight. The slope of a steep hill was below them and gave the horse an advantage. O'Connor grew cool with the emergency. He saw danger in the hill and the sharp turn at its foot, and set all his strength and skill against the animal's madness. Half-way down the hill he was winning, when the reins, which had a weak spot, broke. Destruction looked certain; the pace increased; the wall at the bottom of the hill was terribly near; but O'Connor kept his head. He climbed upon the horse's back and got hold of one of the broken reins, while he stretched forward for the other, which was hanging loose; but he was a moment too late. Before he was able to secure the loose rein the bottom of the hill was reached, the horse swerved suddenly, O'Connor was thrown violently against the wall, and the cart was swung into the ditch and out again. One of the wheels struck the wall, but Elsinora held on; twenty yards further on the horse stood still, trembling.

Elsinora got down with a swimming brain. She found O'Connor unconscious and bleeding from a wound in the head. There was no one near to whom she could call for assistance; there was not even a cottage in sight. She had no knowledge of the proper treatment in such cases; all she could do was to lift his head on her arm and wait until someone came; the most dreadful half-hour she had ever gone through began in this way.

O'Connor remained unconscious; but she loosened his collar and felt his heart, and knew that he was alive. The horse which had done the mischief was making an uncomfortable meal of grass by the roadside, and she had just determined to lead him back and try, if possible, to lift O'Connor into the dog-cart when she heard the welcome sound of wheels, and Father Daly's carriage appeared at the hill-top. He had just given Dick a proof of his liberal-mindedness by praising England's beer and queen.

The situation was speedily — almost without a word — understood and accepted.

"He is not dead," said Elsinora. "Let us lift him into your carriage. Mr. Malory, you can ride hard, — you can ride without a saddle. You must take the other horse out of the shafts and gallop to Kenmare for the doctor — Dr. O'Keefe. Every one will tell you the way. Ride on straight until you come to the chapel, then turn to the right. Bring the doctor to our house; we shall take him there; it is nearer than his own."

O'Connor was lifted into Father Daly's trap; Elsinora sat beside him and supported his head; the good old priest led the horse at walking pace. Dick unharnessed O'Connor's horse, knotted the broken reins, and galloped off.

## CHAPTER IV.

### CONTRABAND OF LOVE.

O'CONNOR remained unconscious. Dr. O'Keefe gave little hope of his recovery. Next day a second doctor was sent for from Cork; he enjoyed the trip, but doomed the patient.

Dick remained at Ballyvonaire. Elsinora had begged him to do so, urging that they might need the help of a man. Mrs. Chillington took his presence for granted: he was one of Elsinora's English friends; she had not the curiosity to ask him a single question about himself. Her daughter Caroline, on the other hand, was extremely curious about him.

"Don't you think we ought to send the poor man away?" she said to Elsinora.

"It must really be terribly dull for him to be staying in a house such as ours is at present," said Elsinora, "in spite of his having you for a companion."

"Oh," laughed Caroline, "indeed, then, it isn't much he is thinking about me. I believe I have discovered a secret, dear: this is another added to your list of conquests. That poor man is head over ears in love with you, and he would rather be moon-

ing about here with a chance of seeing you once a day than be anywhere else in the world. When we were out walking he was in a brown study half the time, unless your name happened to be mentioned, and then —. Well, this is why I think we ought to send him away, unless, of course, you wish him to stay."

Elsinora coloured deeply, but she looked troubled. "You are sure, Caroline?" she asked.

"Perfectly," replied her sister.

"Well, perhaps he had better go," said Elsinora, carelessly. "I will speak to him to-morrow. Kiss me, Caroline; put your arm round me. I am very sad."

Caroline left her in perplexity.

But when next morning came, and Elsinora at the doctor's wish went out to walk, and Dick was her companion, she neglected the opportunity of sending him away. He again spoke of going; she again begged him to stay. He wanted no pressing. If love, or, at least, if marriage was impossible for him, he said to himself, at least friendship was possible, and to be this girl's friend, to be of service to her, to feel she was glad of him, seemed the best life could offer. She, too, found the comfort of comradeship in his presence; the freedom of natural sympathy was between them; each won the best from the other.

They had a long walk this morning. There was nothing in Dick's manner to indicate that he had

any feeling for Elsinora which outstripped friendship. She reflected on this, and came to the conclusion that Caroline had been mistaken, and she was not altogether pleased.

Since the accident Ballyvonaire had been besieged by inquirers of all classes.

"Me heart is broke wid 'em," said Mrs. Irwin, the cook, referring to a crowd of more or less ragged individuals who were regaling themselves on potatoes and buttermilk and other "lashins" in the back kitchen. She addressed herself to a select party, comprising Mrs. Clancy, O'Connor's housekeeper, Sullivan, the butler, Riordan, the Doctor's coachman, and Bridget, the young ladies' maid, who were seated at dinner. "That makes siven-and-twenty this day, and there's no keepin' pace with the atin' and drinkin' of 'em. Well, well, God be good to us, 'twould be unlucky to send 'em away while there's a sick man in the house."

Mrs. Clancy had just reported that there was a slight improvement in O'Connor. It was observed by her manner that she could have said more an she would. Sullivan, who was an aspirant to her hand, perceived with the eye of love that she had a secret, and proposed to himself to share it with her directly they were alone.

In honour of the presence of such a distinguished guest as Mrs. Clancy, a goose had been provided for dinner. Mrs. Irwin felt a legitimate pride as she watched Sullivan carving it. She had known that

goose as an egg; she had reared it, slain it, and cooked it herself, and could now survey it as a complete and accomplished work.

The butler helped Mrs. Clancy first, and with generosity. "And will I give ye a little of the conçalement, Mrs. Clancy?" he asked, with great delicacy. He referred to the seasoning of the bird, having rejected the word "stuffing," which had first occurred to him, as vulgar.

Mrs. Clancy partook heartily; the good woman's appetite had been a trouble to her; she had restrained it, feeling that she had no right to be hungry when her master was dying; but the better news of his condition gave her a right to eat freely.

"'Tis thankful we should be for our health, Mrs. Irwin," she remarked.

"'Deed, then, that's thrue for you, ma'am," said the Doctor's coachman, who was allowed to be an authority on such matters; "we don't know the valley of it till 'tis gone."

"'Deed, yes," said Mrs. Clancy; "look at the poor masther lying there, and think of him — only last Wens'dy as proud and sthrong as a rigiment o' soldiers."

"Lave me mix ye a little sup o' nate whiskey and wather, or a dhrop o' hot nagus, Mrs. Clancy," said the butler, tenderly; "setting up at night'll be a great sthrain on you, and if your sthrength was to give, where'd we be at all?"

"Ah, you're spiling me, Mr. Sullivan! Well, a

sthrain it is, to use your own word. Thank God, I have me health, and can stand it, but I'm fretting about Miss Nora; she's ating nothing and wearing herself out, she is."

"Could you go and coax her, Mrs. Clancy, to rest a bit this afternoon," said Bridget, "and let Miss Caroline or meself take her place?"

Bridget was devoted to Elsinora; she had been with her to England and on the continent, and was reported among the other servants to allow herself airs. It was certain that she had rejected all the advances of the young men of the neighbourhood, but that might be accounted for by the fact that she had left her heart in charge of a policeman at Riplow.

"No, not this afternoon," replied Mrs. Clancy, darkly; "lave them together awhile now."

"Do you think," said Mrs. Irwin, mysteriously, "there was anything betune them, Mrs. Clancy?"

"Sometimes I think there wasn't, and more times I think there was," answered the widow, enigmatically.

"Ah, what nonsense it is you're talking!" said Bridget, impatiently.

"Nonsense, indeed!" said Mrs. Clancy, indignantly, "and who'll tell me the O'Connor isn't good enough for any lady in the land? Where's the blood in the country that'll match his?"

"When Miss Elsinora wants a husband she will look higher, ma'am," said Bridget, with sarcasm. "She can have the pick of the greatest. No, Mrs.

Clancy, we don't want any of your half-pay kings for her."

"Don't be listening to her, Mrs. Clancy," said the butler, anxious to procure peace. "Where are your manners to a guest, Bridget?"

"'Tis joking she was," said Riordan. "Miss Doolan always has a great mind for a joke."

"I did be thinking," remarked the butler, "that there might be something between Miss Elsinora and the English gentleman; she was mightily pleased with him the night he came over when the misthress was away."

"For shame, John Sullivan," said Mrs. Clancy, "to say Miss Nora would look at an Englishman."

"I don't say it at all," replied the butler, eagerly; "I know well she fancied the O'Connor, God bless him and lift him from his bed of suffering. I only —"

"Well," said Bridget, still full of fight, and remembering her policeman, "why shouldn't she look at an Englishman? Didn't her mother marry an Englishman? and have you anything to say against her?"

"And much good he is to any of us," retorted Mrs. Irwin, "and I'll never believe she, a Barry of the ould sthock, married him of her own choice. They drove her to it in furrin parts with witchcraft when she was a slip of a gerrel, and she was too proud, God bless her, to say she repinted it."

Here the dispute was ended by the entrance of one

of the servants with orders from the Doctor to Riordan to drive over at once for Father Daly. Bridget felt injured and departed; Mrs. Clancy shed tears, and was left alone with Sullivan, to whom it fell to comfort her.

"Dear Mrs. Clancy," he said, after she had recovered somewhat, "there's something in your mind. You know more than you'll spake. And why not; 'tisn't for the likes of Bridget, no, nor Mrs. Irwin to hear. But 'tis throubling your thrue sinsitive heart to have a secret alone. I'd be proud to help you to keep it, Mrs. Clancy."

"I know I can thrust you, Mr. Sullivan," said she. "Well, 'tis God's truth, Miss Nora's promised to marry the O'Connor."

"Phwhat!" cried Sullivan, in astonishment.

"And why not?" said Mrs. Clancy.

"Why not, indeed," Sullivan assented; "but 'tis a surprise to me. Whin did it happen?"

"While ago — just before dinner. The poor masther, he woke up and he asked for Miss Nora, and Father Daly was there and Doctor O'Keefe. 'He's dying,' says the Docthor to Miss Nora; 'spake kind to him,' says he. And the O'Connor see her and, 'Was you hurted, dear?' says he, and Miss Nora couldn't spake for throuble. I saw it all, but they didn't know, for I was lying on the other bed restin', and they thought 'twas asleep I was."

"And beguilin' you'd look, Mrs. Clancy," interposed Sullivan, carried away by the picture of the reclining widow.

"Ah, be kwite! don't be talking nonsense, Mr. Sullivan. Well, afther a bit the masther opened his eyes again and took her hand and, says he, 'If I'd got well would there be a chance you'd marry me some day?' says he. And Miss Nora, first she didn't spake, and then she said 'Yes.' And then said the O'Connor, louder and stronger, 'If I do get well, will you marry me?' he says. 'I will,' says she, as proud as a queen. And then the masther fell asleep again, and O'Keefe says there's hope for him now. Well, well, I've told you it all, and what right had I to tell?"

"'Tis hidden where 'twas before, Mrs. Clancy," said Sullivan, "for 'tis in my heart, and my heart is yours."

"Ah! take your arrum from around me, Mr. Sullivan," said Mrs. Clancy. But Sullivan was firm, and the widow was won.

On the afternoon of the next day the news that Elsinora had promised to marry O'Connor was in circulation. The secret had been too much for Mrs. Clancy to keep, and she feared that if she did not tell her friends herself Sullivan might forestall her. Dick heard it discussed among the people. He was surprised to find how much it agitated him, since there was an impassable barrier between them already. Something of the nature of the promise he gathered in confidence from the Doctor. Father Daly had dined at Ballyvonaire and had just departed, after exchanging parting shots of chaff with Dr.

O'Keefe. These two were great friends in spite of difference of religion and politics. The Doctor had explained that he was remaining at Ballyvonaire at some risk to his other patients, for his assistant was a young gentleman of modern ideas in medicine, and a bitter Orangeman, and would probably take the opportunity of his chief's absence to try the new medicines on one or two Land League patients; and Father Daly had replied promptly that the dear creatures were good Catholics, and that both his parishioners and the Doctor's patients were always prepared for death.

"She's too good for him," said the Doctor to Dick, when they were alone. "I don't know the man that's fit to marry her. Oh, she's a beauty, sir! You don't breed 'em like that in England; and what a head she has on her! and look at her figure! — just what a woman ought to be, flat nowhere but in the back."

Dick suffered tortures. He asked what prospect there was of O'Connor's recovery.

"Well, there's a hope and no more," replied O'Keefe; "and it's her doing. Upon my soul, sir, between ourselves, I don't believe she cares a jack-straw for him. It's my belief she gave him the promise because she thought he wouldn't recover. I told her he couldn't; and if he don't there'll be the consolation that — well, he's my patient, and maybe I've said too much; but she's too good for'm; and if she's made a promise she'll stick to it. I know her."

While the suspense lasted Dick could not leave. He hardly dared to ask for news of O'Connor's condition, and the news he feared was improvement, not relapse. He felt like a villain, yet he would have gone out of his way to save this man's life if it had been in his power to do so. It is not an uncommon state of mind: we do service to our fellow-creatures sometimes when we are compelled to confess to ourselves that we should feel satisfaction in their hurt.

But O'Connor began to recover. Directly this was certain Dick made arrangements to leave Ballyvonaire. He noticed, every one noticed, that Elsinora was depressed, and accounted for it by reaction after the excitement of suspense.

Mrs. Chillington did not personally object to her daughter's engagement, but she knew that her husband would be hostile; she knew also that he would endeavour to stop it, and also that he would have no chance of doing so if Elsinora had made up her mind. In the meantime she did not allow herself to be troubled. Caroline was indignant — almost incredulous. On the one occasion when the engagement was referred to between her and her sister she said frankly, "I wish it had been the other man," and made her own conclusions from Elsinora's cheek of fire and trembling lips. She was watchful both of her sister and Dick, and was pleased to know on his last evening that they were still together in the late twilight after the others had left the garden.

Both Dick and Elsinora knew that they would have this last walk together, and though for some time they spoke lightly and of things not close at heart, they also felt that there must be some sort of understanding between them before he went. She led up to it:

"And when will you come and see us again?" she asked. "We have left so much undone and unsaid."

He pointed to the Island of Clogheen, looming darkly in silver waters; "We never had our expedition there."

"No, nor to the Glen of the Seven Whispers, nor to Kishlan-Owen; and we were to have had a dance."

"And you were to have made me a Home Ruler, and I am going home a Unionist still; and you were going to tell me the books of the last two years which I should read, and who had been painting the best pictures, and who had been making the best graven images. Who?" he asked with some interest. "Rodin, I suppose."

"I am afraid I don't know who Rodin is."

"Fancy not knowing! That shows how popular sculpture must be in England. Rodin a strange name, and the French third-class novelists household words."

"You are going back to your work, your art?" she asked.

"I thought of it; I am not quite sure. I don't quite see why I should go on spending time in

modelling clay indifferently when around us the human clay which has already been fashioned is being misshapen and marred. Wouldn't it be better, for instance, to save a few children from degradation than to make a few statues in marble?"

"I should think you might do both, Mr. Malory. Work at your profession should help to other service, not oppose it. Nothing is any good unless your heart is in it. Indeed, I hope you will not give up your profession."

"Why should you care?" he asked.

"Oh well, why?" she replied, "if you put it in that way. But I take an interest in my friends."

"What a muddle we make of our lives," Dick said. "It's an uncertain game."

"It is difficult," she admitted.

"That's not what I complain of. It's the luck and uncertainty of it I hate. Difficulty can be overcome. It's a fine thing to have a goal to work for with difficulties in the way, but what beats one and takes the heart out of one is to have no goal, or rather to see a goal which you must not seek."

She saw that he was speaking from his heart, and it was no vanity which told her that it was the love of her, the possession of her, which was the goal he saw denied to him, though she knew only half the reason why it was denied.

"It's like an innings at cricket," he continued; "you make one mistake and you're done for." He was thinking of his own case, but he gave another

illustration. "Take marriage, for instance. How many a girl marries when she is almost a child, before she knows what she wants in a man; her whole future, her career, is settled there and then. If afterwards she finds a want in her life, if she sees the right man, and he loves her, what can she do? She has to choose between the wretched alternative of repressing the side of her nature which under other circumstances would have been the most beautiful, — it's true blossoming — or she must be dishonourable."

"Oh, no, no," cried Elsinora, "if she knew what true love meant, *neither* course; she need not, she should not repress her love. She need not, she could not be dishonourable. Such a love might be the noblest earth can give."

"You mean through friendship?"

"Their friendship would hold their love enshrined in it. Known to them, but unspoken, — unexpressed because they would know that when its expression involved untruth it would do injury to love to foster it. But still it would be growing, always growing, rising to heights nobler than would have been possible under happier circumstances." She paused a moment. "I believe in love so strongly, Mr. Malory, that I believe it can do no wrong. When wrong begins love fails."

"Perhaps to some, to very noble natures this is possible," said Dick, "but it is not for the world. The world looks askance at any close friendship

between a man and a woman, and the world is often right. This is possible only to a few; to men it is harder than to women."

She seemed about to speak, but checked herself.

"Would this friendship be possible between you and me?" he said suddenly.

"It is what I want," she answered, in a low voice.

"And I have nothing else to live for," Dick replied.

She gave him her hand for a moment, and left him hurriedly. When she was alone in her room she broke down in passionate tears.

## CHAPTER V.

### HUMPHRY BEGINS A COMEDY.

HUMPHRY WRIXON sat under an apple-tree in his corner of the Farinder garden. A copy of Horace's *Odes*, the *Quarterly Review*, an open letter, and some sheets of paper headed "Notes for a Comedy" lay on the seat beside him. He was smoking his largest meerschaum pipe and enjoying the warmth and his own meditations. On the high wall behind him the peaches and plums were absorbing the sunlight; the garden gave out the fulness of summer fragrance; a mingled scent of flowers, and fruit, and leaves, of carnations and heliotrope, pears and rhubarb stems and earth, all blended in the warmth. In a distant corner old Voweraker was digging potatoes, and above the wall against the side of the Priory Mr. Wrixon was to be seen on a ladder removing the weeds from the mouth of a choked gurgoyle.

The future of his nephew and of other acquaintances absorbed Humphry for a long time that morning. It was his favourite theory that life is a comedy, that comedy is the only part which man is designed to play, and that if he attempts any other he is disobedient to nature, and immediately becomes

an affected and worthless actor. "For," said his notes, "we are imperfect creatures, and comedy is the contingent of imperfection, and he who would play tragedy assumes the existence of the ideal and achieves anticlimax. On the stage a man may be allowed to act as though the feelings of the moment were eternal; his conduct may appear the result of undying hate or unwavering love; and these produce tragedy. But in real life men, good and bad, are forgiving and forgetful, capable of inconstancy, and, however honourable, discreet enough to compromise with comfort. Nature, indeed, is our teacher; her own doings are not tragic; she plays a comfortable part, she forgets, she works, but without effort; she takes the present good, she goes the old round, she weeps not at death nor decay: these are good, they lead up to new life. She is not unkind save to those who do not read her lessons — those who will not be content to play the part allotted to them, who expect more than she has to give. She gives what she has freely; those who seek for more, who follow after ideals, punish themselves, not she them. Those who have not learnt this only provoke ridicule; they strut across the boards, they curse the tumble at which they should laugh; they are thinking of their own part only, not the harmony of the whole piece."

The contemplation of certain tendencies in Dick's nature which threatened disobedience to the laws of wholesome comedy, his desire to perform heroically

on the comic stage, and Humphry's conviction that, despite this, he would have to conform to its requirements, had led him to the shaping of a comedy for himself, in which Dick and other real persons were the characters. It was to be a nice leisurely play which might take two or three years to bring to the third act, wherein fortunes are decided and performers pass over to the ranks of the spectators. It was to demonstrate his views and confirm his theory.

While he was meditating Margaret Longfield entered the garden. Her coming seemed to Humphry to bring the freshness of spring, as though a breeze had sprung up and stirred the languid summer fragrance of the garden.

"Good morning, Margaret," said he.

"Good morning, Mr. Philosopher. I'm looking for Nan everywhere."

"When last I saw her that excellent person, Miss Jenkins of Salisbury, was instructing her in the French tongue."

"Poor Miss Jenkins! she's dreadfully afraid of you. She says she never knows when you are serious."

"I'm dreadfully afraid of her."

"And you two ought to be such friends. You ought to take her for walks, and show her all sorts of attentions. Oh, I remember, I want to ask your advice about my cook." Mrs. Longfield was away from home, and Margaret had charge of the housekeeping at the Manor-House. "I'm in great trouble

about her. You know she's such a good cook, and I don't want to lose her, but I'm afraid she must go. She's taken to swearing."

"This is very serious," said Humphry.

"Isn't it dreadful? She makes heavenly pastry, but the other servants have complained."

"Does she swear at them?"

"No; she swears at things. Bevan told me that she 'abuses the pots shameful.' She could not permit herself to repeat her words, but she said she could hardly cook a chop without using 'language.' Now, ought I to keep her just because she's a good cook? You're a philosopher, and I will take your advice."

"Couldn't you remonstrate with her, perhaps?"

"I'm afraid. I meant to this morning after breakfast, and I lay awake for hours last night thinking how to say it, and at prayers this morning — you know now mother's away I have to read prayers, to servants and all — my mind was so full of it that I forgot what I was reading, and actually said, 'for Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the language.' What am I to do?"

"I'm afraid I cannot give you any advice," said Humphry, laughing.

"Yes," observed Margaret, pitifully, "that's just the way with you moralists; you read books about ethics, and you can't decide the smallest practical problem. Well, I am disturbing your studies. I suppose you were reading something dreadfully dull."

"No. I was composing. I am making a comedy."

"No! how splendid! A real one for the stage?"

"Oh, no!"

"Well, to read?"

"God forbid that I should ever publish anything. I shall not even write it. I am composing it for my own amusement. You are one of the characters."

"Please make me the heroine."

"Yes, you are the heroine."

"And may we hear all about it when it's done?"

"Yes, I think so, but it may take two or three years."

"That's much too long." She caught sight of Dick's handwriting. "There's a letter from Dick," she said, in a changed tone, and with a flush of surprise.

"Yes. He'll be here next week; he's arrived — at least in Ireland."

"In Ireland!"

"At a place called Ballyvonaire Castle. People called Chillington live there. He met them at the Dandos, I think, but I did not know he was intimate with them. I saw the girl once."

"He doesn't seem very anxious to see his own people," said Margaret, with vexation.

"I suppose after a couple of years he thinks a week one way or the other will not matter. He talks of settling down again to his old work."

"And he'll be here in a week, really? Does Nan know?"

"Yes, she's crazy about it."

"And does he seem happy and — and not like he was before he went?"

"Oh, he says very little, but he still seems discontented. The earth isn't good enough for him. Everything he has become acquainted with has displeased him. Apparently there are only two things left in which he has not lost faith."

"Which?"

"Women and himself."

"He is very good to include women."

"And these remain," said Humphry, "probably because he is but imperfectly acquainted with either."

"You make me perfectly hate you when you talk in that affected cynical way," Margaret replied. "Everything worth knowing improves on acquaintance. You've had no experience of women, so you can't be a judge."

"Many a man, my child, has outlived his faith both in himself and in women, and has contrived to be comfortable and happy. But perhaps you will be able to do something with the fellow."

Margaret coloured. "Oh dear, no!" she said. "Well, I must really go and find Nan, or I shall not get back in time for lunch. Mind, I shall expect you to come to my bazaar next Wednesday."

She had no thought left for her cook as she walked away. Humphry watched her till she was out of sight. Then he lighted another pipe, and returned to the contemplation of his comedy.

Margaret was his heroine, and Dick in the end

was to lead her to the altar. Tom Longfield was to perform a similar part with Nan. "The altar," said Humphry's notes, "is the *cul de sac* of the imagination; if for the actors it be ever a gateway to golden regions, the spectator is not permitted to follow."

Some of the early scenes had already been enacted. In these the impetuous and quixotic youth seeks the world; he is full of ideals which the world does not realise for him, but he is undaunted, he will reform the world; but the world is stubborn, and the youth grows unpleasant; he is wrathful, he will none of it; he abandons the work he has chosen, and becomes a cowboy in the far west. But here, too, he is disgusted; irritated by the want of Arcadian simplicity among his associates, he again returns to civilisation, with a mind not yet clear of its vapours. And all this time above the mists, if he could but see it, the love of the sweetest girl in England is constant for him, like the clear blue of heaven. He will see it later on, though he will hardly deserve his good fortune. And now comes a definite danger. Another woman, Miss Chillington, has won an influence over him. She is apparently half fashionable flirt, half Irish patriot — a person to avoid. His hero has seen her before his departure; he has not forgotten her during his absence, and visits her on his way home.

Definite details were here wanting, but Humphry assumed that on his arrival in Cork his hero is converted to Home Rule principles by the car-driver on the way to the railway station, and is thus enabled

to present himself to the lady as the true friend of old Ireland. But he is too late. He arrives at her home only to find her betrothed to the O'Beamish, a legislator. Dick was not a natural comedian, and Miss Chillington was just the person who might lead him to play a ridiculous part: he might by some rashness risk his own happiness and Margaret's. Time would unroll these scenes, and Humphry would be watchful, and in the end it would be well. Nay, if events seemed to be shaping themselves adversely in the intermediate scenes, he might be induced for once to become an actor himself, with a view to helping the desired climax.

Among the other characters in his comedy were Tom Longfield and Nan. He knew that neither of these could play any part but that of sensible comedy. Tom was expected home shortly. He would find the child who used to romp with him in the first freshness of her womanhood, demure but approachable. To her the young soldier would appear heroic; and after the trial of a few years' parting he would relinquish his ideal of military glory, and please his father by settling down as a country gentleman. He would be a judge of cattle, and a supporter of the Church. And supposing they did not love and marry each other, it was no great matter. With natures like theirs marriage was generally a success; the partners made little difference, for they would inevitably choose respectably. He regarded Tom, although he might sow a few hereditary wild oats,

as essentially a domestic person, even as he saw in Dick the reverse; and Nan was of the large class of English maidens, well brought up, who worship the husband by virtue of his office, just as the High Church party does homage to an evangelical bishop, or a pious loyalist bows down to a dissolute king. Whether these two married or not, therefore, — and in contemplating his third act he always saw them kneeling together at the altar — domestic felicity awaited them.

Having made these forecasts for the characters in whom he was most interested, he wrote down a list of the persons of his comedy, thus: —

WRIXON MALORY — A sculptor with a fine contempt for clay.
THOMAS LONGFIELD — An officer in the British Army, who respects himself so thoroughly that he may even regret that he is not one of the female characters, so that he might have married Thomas Longfield.
NORTON TRISTRAM — A disreputable poet.
CLOVIS CLOUDESLEY SHOVEL — A comic actor intended by his author to be serious.
THE O'BEAMISH — An uncrowned king.
MARGARET SELWYN LONGFIELD.
MISS CHILLINGTON.
ANNE MALORY.
FATHERS, UNCLES, GUARDIANS, and other supernumeraries.

## CHAPTER VI.

### TERPSICHORE IN AN ATTIC.

DICK went direct to London before visiting Farinder. He was eager for news of Connie; she might have gone abroad with Strong; she might be dead; there might be some opening for escape from his bonds. If the barrier of his marriage had not existed he would have had little scruple in endeavouring to make Elsinora break the promise given to O'Connor under circumstances which he held not binding, though he might have doubted whether she would have listened to him. The exceptional nature of his marriage, the injustice of his fetters, made him hope there might be relief for him. Immediately on arriving in London he called at the chambers of an old friend, who was a barrister, and put to him a hypothetical case similar to his own, telling him that he required the knowledge for a novel he was writing. He learned that such bonds were inseverable, and took the information with well-assumed cheerfulness, saying that this would just suit his plot.

From his legal friend he went to Strong's old lodgings. Strong was not there. Another address was given, and another search was fruitless. It was

night; the streets were crowded with people just leaving the music halls and theatres when he at last found his friend. He knocked at the door, but received no answer; then he tried the handle, and found that the door was open. It was quite dark within. He struck a match, saw a treacherous-looking staircase at his feet, and the name "R. Strong, top floor," written under some others in chalk on the wall. Faint sounds of music greeted him from the attic as he ascended — a lively measure of the music halls. On the landing at the top of the stairs he paused before entering: a girl's voice checked him. Through a wide split in the panel of the door came a bright stream of light. The fiddling recommenced, and there was a sound of dancing. He peeped curiously through the crack and gave an exclamation of surprise. He had seen a very unexpected picture.

At one end of the room on a mattress sat Strong, his back propped with a pillow, a fiddle at his ear. He was evidently ill, or recovering from illness, but there was a smile on his worn face. The other end of the room was divided from the musician by a row of impromptu footlights, composed of two small paraffin lamps with reflectors and half a dozen fragments of candle. Behind these was Connie, arrayed in ballet costume, dancing fantastically, her magnificent dark eyes flashing, her form a splendour of brightness against the dark background.

A bitter smile crossed Dick's face. "And this is

my wife!" he thought. He turned to go, but came back, fascinated, to look again.

There was an expression of boyish pleasure on Strong's rugged, intellectual face: his eyes were fixed on Connie as he played. She was flinging herself into the attitude loved by the public, to the rhythm of a *pas de quatre* measure. The picture was perplexing, unreal to Dick. A sudden memory came to him of a different dancing scene — of the sea and sweet air and the mountains, and Elsinora dancing in the moonlight to old Thady's fiddling. He thrust the picture from him: it was too dear to be dwelt on now.

He could look no longer, nor could he go in; he went away restless and troubled, only to return half an hour later. Connie had gone, the bright light no longer came through the crack in the door. One lamp was at the bedside, and Strong had a book in his hand, but he was not reading. He sprang up when he saw Dick, and was unable at first to speak. Dick saw his agitation, and greeted him affectionately.

"Is it peace or war?" Strong asked, without taking his proffered hand. "I mean," he added, seeing Dick's look of perplexity, "Have you come to take my girl away from me or not?"

"She is your wife," said Dick, — "nothing, less than nothing, to me. You've been ill. Don't talk about her just now."

Strong calmed himself by an effort of will. "Pass

me my pipe, sir," he said; "I'm allowed to smoke. I have not had a pipe this evening. I knew she was coming, and did not want the room to smell. You look a bit older and thinner, but brown and well."

Dick laughed. "I'm as hard as nails," he said, and spoke of his rough work in the west. He hardly knew what he was saying, and Strong hardly heard; both were thinking of Connie.

At last Strong said, "Did you see her? I thought I heard a step on the stairs. Did you see her dancing?"

"Yes."

"And you could stand it? She didn't bewitch you? You could resist her? You didn't come to claim her as your wife?"

"I wish to God," said Dick, "I had never seen her, and was never to see her again; she has spoilt my whole life. I reached London to-day. I came straight here to see you. I thought something might be — but I'll come to-morrow; you're too ill for any more of this to-night."

"No," said Strong, "I shall be worse if you go before we have had it out. I'm not very ill now. I'm nearly well. She's been very good to me while I've been down." His face became happier at a recollection. "She came here to-night," he continued, "after the ballet she's engaged in was over, because she thought it would liven me up a bit to see her dance."

"She's — she's not living here with you?" Dick said.

"This is no place for her," said Strong, with fresh anger. "No, sir, she's not lived with me since you went away, and I don't believe she has with anybody else either. There's a lot of them — curse them — after her. She lets them spend money on her, but — no more, no more, I'd swear it; and if it hadn't been for this illness throwing me back I might have got her out of the country."

"That's what must be done," said Dick; "it must be arranged. You'll have to borrow the money from me if you won't accept it. I have a right to insist on your doing so if you mean to stick to her. We can't arrange anything to-night, but I'll come again, and I'll see her too."

"Let me see her first," said Strong, anxiously.

"Yes. I'll be back in a week — perhaps sooner. I haven't been down to see my people yet. I'll go to-morrow, and then come back to you. It may all go well for you yet, Strong — not for me. I'm done for. It makes no difference. She's spoilt my life."

Strong looked at him keenly. "Tell me," he said; "no need of secrets between us. You love someone else."

"Yes."

"Thank God. — Well, I'm a selfish brute. I was thinking of myself. I thought if you loved someone else you would never want to take her. I was think-

ing of myself, and yet — thank God, for your sake too. Whether you lose her or not, it is better that you should love, though it makes you unhappy. This unhappiness will be better than any other happiness."

Strong lay back on his pillow; he was exhausted. Dick took his hand.

"I'm going," he said. "We've talked enough to-night. I'll be back soon. Good-bye, Strong."

"Good-bye, mate. God bless you."

"I'm afraid it's too late. He has missed some excellent opportunities," said Dick.

## CHAPTER VII.

### MRS. WRIXON MALORY.

ELSINORA was never out of Dick's thoughts: he treasured each word she had said, he mused on the laughter and the sadness in her eyes, the turn of her head, the touch of her hand. He thought and did many foolish things which comforted him; wrote and burned letters to her in which he made believe that they were happy lovers, free to express what now had to be withheld; in the streets of London he gave half-a-crown to an organ-grinder because the air he ground was Irish; he cherished and constantly looked at a sprig of rare spring heather blossom which she had given to him. He was possessed by her; it seemed to him that he had previously lost his soul, and that she had become his soul, and now he had lost her.

Margaret Longfield and Humphry were observers of a change in him. Margaret was anxious, Humphry perplexed. Humphry was glad, Mr. Wrixon gravely delighted to hear that he was going back to his old work. Elsinora had expressed a wish that he should do so, which was enough, otherwise he would not have cared at present what he did.

His ridiculous old friend Clovis Shovel, devoted and neglected, came into his thoughts at this time. He remembered him affectionately, and their days together on his first arrival in London, when he had set about the conquest of the world. He asked him down to Farinder, and Clovis came gladly; he was overworked, but doing well; he had few friends and few pleasures outside his work, and his visit to Farinder was a dream of bliss to him. In addition to Dick's presence, he found delight in everything and everybody. Mr. Wrixon and he became great friends, and had long talks about art in the workshop. He fell respectfully in love with Margaret Longfield directly he saw her; but, knowing himself to be an impossible suitor, and having made up his mind that Dick would marry her, he worshipped her as an impossible ideal only. Every one liked him; every one laughed when his name was mentioned. He had a melancholy soul, but it was disguised in a humorous body, as some sad thoughts are expressed in jesting phrases.

To Humphry his name no less than his appearance was a constant wonder and delight. He longed to address him in full every time he saw him. He found pleasure in murmuring his name over to himself, "O Clovis Cloudesley Shovel! Clovis Cloudesley Shovel!" at odd moments. Even Mr. Wrixon was amused, and tempted to make use of his face in the carving of a gurgoyle.

One evening, a week after Dick's arrival, the

unusual number of seven sat down to dinner at the Priory, for, in addition to Dick and Clovis, the Squire and Margaret were there. It was not yet dark out of doors; the roofs of Farinder village could be seen far below through the open window, the rasp of the corncrake came from the hayfield, the whir of the night-jar from the woods on the hillside. Candles in ancestral silver candle-sticks made the table a centre of light in the dark room. Nan, pale and dignified, sat at the head of the table; Mr. Wrixon, hale and ruddy, at the foot; Margaret between Humphry and Clovis. Dick thought she looked even prettier in her white evening dress than in the dark blue riding habit which she had worn in the afternoon, and when he saw her he praised her to her face with the privilege of old friendship. Clovis, on the other hand, poor, inarticulate Clovis, was silently worshipping: he could hardly eat his dinner. The Squire was in high spirits, as usual; he ate and laughed and drank robustly. Mr. Wrixon was supremely happy.

"There is no pleasure like seeing the old faces round one, eh, Longfield?" said he to the Squire.

"And a good dinner in front of 'em, Wrixon. Old faces and old wine. No, thank you, Humphry. I know that claret, but if you don't mind I'll have some beer now. Curious, isn't it, how fashions change in drink. When I was young it was port wine, brandy, and beer. Livers won't stand it now, and youngsters drink bad sour claret and Scotch

whiskey. Now, I'll engage you don't drink a bottle of port wine a month, sir,'" he said, addressing Clovis as a representative of the young generation. "I was certain of it," he added, receiving a blushing negative with triumphant laughter. "Dear, dear, what changes I have seen in my time!"

"Have you ever considered the correspondence between national character and national drinks?" asked Humphry.

"Oh, for goodness sake," Margaret entreated, "don't let us begin to talk subjects."

"My dear young lady, we will talk about what you like," replied Humphry, blandly. What shall it be? People, perhaps?"

"Not at all," said Margaret, who was continually sparring with Humphry. "I know you think girls can't talk about anything but people; but we want to talk now about something we can all join in, Mr. Philosopher."

"Humphry was just going to prove to us the similarity of character between the English and the Chinese by their mutual love of tea, my dear," said Mr. Wrixon.

"The babies of all the nations of the world resemble each other," Humphry suggested mildly, "and there is a marked unanimity in their taste in the matter of drink."

"Oh," cried Nan, "are babies all alike indeed? That shows how much Uncle Humphry knows about it, doesn't it, Margaret? Babies are just as unlike as grown-up people,—almost more alike, I believe."

"Yes," said Margaret, "he only pretends to think they are alike. He *knows* they are not."

"When Mr. Shovel was a baby," Dick related, "he was frightened by a rat on the stairs, and it had such an effect on his nerves that he refused to eat meat for three years. Isn't that so, Clovis?"

"My mother often speaks of it," Clovis replied; and they all laughed heartily.

"But *you* don't think all babies' faces are the same, Mr. Shovel?" asked Margaret.

"Of course not," replied Clovis, gladly.

"Then you are beaten," said Nan to Humphry. "We have an artist on our side, and he is always examining faces."

"He made a most valuable suggestion about the uncarved blocks in the chapel to day," said Mr. Wrixon. "I am deeply interested in your discovery, Mr. Shovel. Mr. Shovel considers that in the completed carvings the same face is portrayed. You remember they are on opposite sides. One represents a young man, eager, passionate, restless, with the locks clustering about his brows: the other a man ten years older, hooded as a monk, the face sad but calm. Mr. Shovel says it is the same face in both, and if so, this should be the idea for the unfinished ones — the same face in each pair, the one before the world has been met, the other after the change of trial and experience."

"I am afraid," said Humphry, "that if the examples were made modern we should not often find

the effect of time and experience so advantageous as in the studies Mr. Shovel suggests. We should have youthful hope and middle-aged disillusion; young faith and mature doubt; maidenly innocence and womanly worldliness. It would be a fine lesson to most of us, if an unpalatable one, to see, *vis-à-vis*, our faces at twenty and at forty. Here is your gallant young soldier, his countenance speaking of eagerness to fight his country's battles; there your half-pay major with a liver and a bad temper. Here is your young reformer, jealous for the cause of the poor; there the city man, who will have to be modelled in a high hat. And your maiden! — I shudder at contrasting her face at twenty with — "

"Oh, someone make him be quiet," cried Margaret.

"Quite right," said the Squire, "he's humbugging again. If a man's any good at twenty, he's a better man at forty."

"And a woman?" asked Nan.

"Well — ah, yes — of course," replied the Squire.

"Well, uncle," said Dick, "you must promise to carry out this idea."

Mr. Wrixon shook his head. "No," he said, "if once they are carved they cannot be uncarved again. If I fail, as I feel I should, they would be a lasting reproach to me."

"You would not fail, sir," said Dick. "But I know the feeling — no work ever comes up to one's ideal."

Clovis suggested Pygmalion's image.

"All ideals are uncarved blocks," remarked Humphry. "I have no patience with them. I prefer the spirit of the man who said he'd make a spoon or spoil a horn. As to Pygmalion, Mr. Shovel, that was a solitary case of a man realising his ideal; and I'll venture to say that if he had been allowed to retain in the flesh the young lady he carved, and had married her, in twelve months' time he would have been at work on another image, and found the new one the more beautiful. The ideal is another word for the unattainable. Ideals are demoralising."

Dick understood that these remarks were intended for his benefit, and exchanged humorous glances with Humphry.

"It was curious your fright from the rat should have made you a vegetarian, Mr. Shovel," said Margaret. "I am glad you are not one now. I can't bear vegetarians."

"I believe that the people of five hundred years hence will look upon us as little better than cannibals," Humphry observed. "However, I am glad it is not five hundred years hence."

The Squire fumed. "Thank heaven I shall be gathered to my fathers before that day comes, if it ever does come, which is impossible. What would become of the farmers? No, begad! it is absurd. Why, my dear fellow, try and fancy the country without cattle, and sheep, and pigs; there are whole districts fit for nothing but grazing. Did God give us that land for nothing? Look at Ireland! And

what are they going to feed men and make muscle with? No, it's damn nonsense to think of it!" The Squire was much moved. "By the way, Dick," he continued, after a draught of beer, "talking of Irish cattle, I see a fellow who knows nothing about it has been writing to the *Times*, saying that, instead of sending over the lean cattle to be fed up in England, they ought to fatten them themselves and get the benefit of the extra business. The thing's impossible — the grass there's too juicy, on account of the moisture of the air; it grows tremendously fast, but it's mostly hollow stuff; it does for young beasts, but it won't fatten. Now, I daresay you noticed it yourself."

But Dick was in a brown study.

"Something like the Irish people," remarked Mr. Wrixon; "they don't get fat at home; but they are a fine stock, and if you send them to other countries they do well. I beg your pardon, Longfield, you were asking Dick about the cattle."

"Oh, the grass," said Dick, arousing himself. "Yes, it was certainly very green and luxuriant, as you say. The Kerry cattle are little fellows."

"Yes, I know that," said Mr. Longfield, laughing. "You would never do for a farmer, Dick, I'm afraid. I expect your mind was full of the condition of the peasantry, and so on. I hope you didn't get hold of any twaddling Home Rule sentiments while you were there. You are not for giving 'em their own parliament, eh? No! well, I am glad of that; one never

knows what mad theories young fellows will take up with nowadays. By the way, Dick, I don't think you can have kissed the Blarney Stone when you were there. What has become of your tongue, man? Humphry, give the fellow some wine. I remember the time when you had rather too much to say, and we had to shut you up sometimes; there was nothing you would not argue about, and now you are as solemn as a Methodist. Pitch into him, girls, and wake him up."

"Well, Dick," began Margaret, "did you go to Blarney on this mysterious expedition of yours?"

"That's a secret," said Dick.

"It is not a very easy thing to kiss," said Mr. Wrixon. "I understand that the stone is outside, three or four from the top, and you have to be let down by the legs."

"They say that after kissing it you never blush again, don't they?" asked Clovis.

"Yes, sir," answered the Squire, and he could not resist the indiscretion of whispering to Humphry, "That only applies to ladies."

Margaret looked at her hostess with mock formality and demonstration of drawing on of gloves to indicate the desirability of a move.

"Nan," said Dick, perceiving, "you may eat another orange, and then you may retire;" and when the orange was finished Clovis had the honour of holding the door open while his hostess and her guest departed.

There was much lingering at the fireside after dinner — a time for leisurely, comfortable talk, easy-flowing laughter, the benediction of tobacco. Time ceased to hurry these friends forward; he moved not himself, he sat down and hob-nobbed amongst them.

Clovis alone thought it would be pleasanter to be with the girls and listen to music, but even he looked happy. The old men were as gay as lads. Humphry talked on every subject which arose. Dick was the quietest of the party. The familiar scene, and still more the sound of old familiar voices, which years seem to have so little effect in changing, took him back to the old Farinder days of his boyhood when the world was unknown and the pathway of life unexplored. The lapse of time between two scenes which are similar disappears; it seemed only yesterday that he had heard the Squire and his uncle laugh together in that room after dinner; it seemed years rather than weeks since he had said good-bye to Elsinora.

Later in the evening, when the Squire had gone to sleep on a sofa under the influence of Clovis's music, and Nan had played on the violin, and Margaret had sung one of the songs which had once been a favourite with Dick, he gave an indication of the direction towards which the current of his thoughts set. He made no allusion to the song which she had sung; he did not say it reminded him of old times; he thanked her and said:

"By the bye, Margaret, do you happen to know any of the Irish airs?"

A look of vexation came to her happy face.

"One or two," she answered, coldly.

"'The Valley lay smiling before me'?"

"Yes, it is in this collection. I might manage it."

"Ah, do!" He spoke with more animation than he had shown during the whole evening.

Elsinora did not sing, but he had heard her sister sing this song when he was at Ballyvonaire. Margaret's voice was sweeter than Miss Caroline Chillington's. It is a sad air. When she had finished, Nan saw that there were tears in her eyes.

Dick was dreaming of the sound of quiet waters under starry skies at Ballyvonaire, and of Elsinora and all that might have been, when a letter was brought to him. The servant informed him that the young lady was waiting for an answer in the cloisters but would not come in.

Dick had developed some talent for coolness latterly; he needed it when he opened the envelope; it contained nothing but a card, on which was written the name,

MRS. WRIXON MALORY.

"All right," he said, rising hurriedly. "I'll come down. I fancy it concerns my friend Strong," he added to Humphry, who had a broad grin on his face.

Dick was more angry than surprised. Nothing Connie did surprised him; he half expected to see her in ballet costume, but he found her respectably, indeed gracefully, attired.

When she saw him coming she ran to him. "Don't be angry with me, Dick, please, for coming. I couldn't help coming straight to you when I heard you'd arrived."

"What is it?" Dick asked. "What do you want with me?"

She felt or assumed disappointment at his coldness. "After he's been away two years a wife don't need an excuse to come to her husband," she replied.

"What's the use of humbugging," said Dick; "you know perfectly well that you're nothing at all to me."

"No," she said, "you don't mean that. You won't throw me over, Dick? I could understand you not forgiving me that night you went away, but all the while you've been gone I've been true to you. I've been as straight as a gun barrel, because I knew you'd come back, and then you'd forgive me and take me away with you."

Dick was completely unmoved, but he hardly knew what to say to her. They were walking up and down the dark cloisters; from the open window of the distant room the sound of music reached them faintly. Connie paused, and put her hand on Dick's shoulder. "You will forgive and forget," she said.

Her endearing touch was hateful to him. "I forgive you," he said, "if that's any good; but we are nothing to each other. You understand that."

"No," she said with spirit, "I know better. We're a deal to each other — we're husband and wife. Look here!" She held up her finger with the wedding ring on it. "I threw it away, but I found it next morning and put it on again, and there it's going to stay. And I've been true to it. I've done nothing to disgrace you since you put it there yourself, and I don't see why you should disown me." She made a final attempt at persuasion. "I know I'm a bad lot, but not so bad as you think, and I've stuck to you, Dick, and we always got on together. I'll be a good wife to you. I'll swear it, I will."

"I'll swear you won't," thought Dick; but he could not bring himself to say cruel words to a pleading woman. He put it as kindly as he could. "It's no use, Connie. Make up your mind to it at once. You can do something if you like to make up for the wrong you have done."

"Wrong I've done to who?"

"To Strong and to me."

"Oh, never mind Strong. What wrong have I done to you? If you mean that marrying me's prevented you marrying some lady — your Irish princess, perhaps — what about the wrong you've done me? I can't marry either, if I want to do

the respectable. I've had my chances while you've been gone. There's one or two — there's Mr. Eustace — would marry me, and you've spoilt my chances. Don't talk to me about doing you a wrong and spoiling your life. And it's not your money or your support I want. I can earn my own living, but I'm your wife, and I mean you should know it, and every one else too, and your Irish princess."

"Hold your tongue," said Dick, fiercely. "Don't say another word, you must go."

Connie was almost frightened at his manner. She walked gravely at his side to the end of the cloisters.

"I'll come with you to the gate," said Dick. "It's no use talking any more here to-night. I'll see you in London next week."

Humphry, smoking a cigar, passed them in the avenue, but did not speak.

"Where are you going to stay to-night?" asked Dick.

"Oh, I can look after myself," answered Connie. "You needn't be afraid that your wife will be found dead from exposure in a ditch to-morrow morning. I've a cab waiting to take me back to Wayland. Well! you've done with me?"

"Whatever I can do for you, I will."

"Yes, exactly; some pretty scheme to reform me a little extra. Well, we'll see. I think that must have been Uncle Humphry we passed coming down. You may give him his niece's love, if you like.

Pray, don't let me take you any farther. Good-bye, my dear."

That night Humphry added another name to the *dramatis personæ* of his comedy. It was:

"Mysterious Female — a possible Marplot."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### ELSINORA AND CONNIE.

THE promise which Elsinora had made to O'Connor was to her none the less binding because it had been given in the belief that she would not be required to fulfil it. The Doctor had said that her words had decided the course of O'Connor's illness, and this made the promise seem peculiarly sacred. A life had been won by it. She faced the situation bravely: she would not be untrue. O'Connor had, during the first days of his recovery, given her an opportunity of withdrawing, and she had not taken it. And yet Dick was always in her heart, and the thought of marrying O'Connor grew more and more unbearable. It was not until after Dick had gone that she really knew how dear he was to her. She thought of him as often and as fondly as he of her. Her nature had opened to him; the influence which comes once only in a life had come to her in him; the touch to which her whole soul could respond was his. Feelings before unknown, shy inexpressible thoughts were enshrined in her love for him. The barrier which was between them strengthened rather than weakened her love. It idealised it.

It seemed to her that a love which could endure in spite of hostile circumstances and without the reward of marriage might rise to a nobler height than would have been possible if all had run smoothly. This in her happier moods.

At other times she was oppressed by a sense of loneliness and weariness in the thought of the rest of her life separated from the companionship she desired. She clung to the memory of the bond they had made at parting. She knew that her faith to it could not fail, but she would grow apprehensive lest his might not endure. She longed to tell him the circumstances under which her promise had been made, to assure him her love was not given to another. She had promised to marry, not to love; and she wondered whether, if Dick knew this, he would plead with her to break her promise, and whether she would be strong enough to resist. Again, she would ask herself if she would not be doing a man a greater injury by marrying him when she loved another than by breaking a promise. This she put aside as a temptation. The strain on her was great, and it was made greater by her having to conceal what she felt, to keep up appearances, receive congratulations on her engagement, and act becomingly to O'Connor. Dr. O'Keefe was for the first time in his life dissatisfied with her state of health, and was urgent as to the necessity of a change. She was only too ready to agree, and as soon as O'Connor had recovered sufficiently to

return to his home, she left Ballyvonaire to pay her previously arranged visits in England.

Neither she nor Dick had written; both had felt the impossibility of expressing in a letter what they had at heart. Silence was better. But Elsinora had made up her mind she must see him while she was in England.

Somerford claimed her first, and after spending a week there she went up to London for a few days with Lady Dando. A chance meeting which had important results for her took place at the Grosvenor Gallery. Connie had gone there by appointment to meet a friend, and whilst waiting she saw Tristram talking to Lady Dando and Elsinora. Connie had kept out of the way both of Dick and Strong since her visit to Farinder, for she had not yet decided as to her plan of action. Directly she recognised Elsinora she grew alert. "The Irish princess," she thought; "I think I'll find out where she lives and have a talk with her." She approached near enough to hear what was being said. They spoke of Dick during the conversation.

"We want you to tell us where his studio is now," said Lady Dando. "Miss Chillington wishes to see a sculptor's studio. I also am curious."

Tristram gave her the address.

"Then we'll call to-morrow afternoon; that will suit our plans, I think, my dear."

"Oh, yes," said Elsinora, with apparent indifference. "Come, Mr. Tristram, and point out the best pictures to us."

Connie withdrew. She had heard enough; she decided that she also would be present at the interview.

She went early next afternoon to Dick's rooms. He was out; it was not known when he would return. She prepared to wait. She took off her hat and jacket, and proceeded to look round. It was a pleasant little room opening into the studio. Connie removed a cigar box and pipes and a pyramid of books and magazines from the table, and arranged the flowers on the mantelpiece more to her liking. Then she took a glance at herself in the glass door of a book-case, gave her hair a few touches with her hands, and settled herself in Dick's chair.

Shortly afterwards Elsinora arrived. She had made up her mind to come alone, and asked Lady Dando to call for her an hour later. She could not bear the thought of meeting Dick in the presence of others. Her heart beat quickly as she knocked at the door. No greeting could be satisfactory. No word she could say to him would express what she longed to say. She must give him her hand while she longed to put her arms round his neck. Day by day her love for Dick had grown stronger. She felt she was weak in going to him. She almost knew that if he claimed her she would yield, that she would be untrue to her promise and sacrifice every earthly consideration for him. She feared to encounter his pleading; she feared yet more that he might not plead with her; she was almost relieved when she

heard that he was not at home. She decided to leave a note for him, and went in.

As she entered the room Connie rose with dignity. Elsinora looked puzzled for a moment; then she recognised her and grew uncomfortable.

"I am so sorry," said Connie, pleasantly, "that my husband is out."

"I beg your pardon," said Elsinora; "I must have made a mistake and come to the wrong house. I thought it was Number 28, Mr. Malory's studio."

"Oh, it's quite right," Connie assured her; "you know my husband, then? Of course, now I recognise you. Don't you remember? we've met a time or two already." She watched with keen enjoyment Elsinora's changing colour. "Do sit down; you seem tired."

Elsinora mechanically took the chair offered. She was a brave girl, but her self-possession had deserted her for a minute; she did not at first believe that Connie was Dick's wife. What she feared was worse than that, from her point of view. She believed Connie must be his mistress, and her joy in the thought of Dick was stricken.

Connie rang the bell. "Would you send us some tea," she asked the servant, with an air of authority.

"We're hardly settled," she told Elsinora, confidentially, "and I must apologise for the state of the rooms. I've hardly had time to put things straight, and men are such untidy creatures, especially artists. No, you're not going? Dick will be that disap-

pointed if he hears you've been. I know he likes you. I've heard him say as much."

This was too much for Elsinora; it chilled her to self-possession. "I am afraid my other engagements will prevent my waiting," she said, rising.

"Oh, well, if you can't, you can't. I suppose you were surprised to hear Dick was married."

"Mr. Malory did not mention it," she answered.

Connie took pains to give her visitor a good view of the wedding ring.

"No," she laughed; "it's a secret. Only you and one other knows. I told you because I thought you'd be interested. I told him he ought to have told you before when he was staying at your house. But I must make you promise not to let it out; even his own folks don't know, and if it came out before the time there might be trouble. You'll promise to keep it dark?"

"Certainly. I shall not speak of it," said Elsinora, coldly. "I must really say good afternoon."

"Well, I must say," said Connie, "you don't seem too friendly to an old friend's wife. No congratulations. P'raps you think I'm not good enough for him, or p'raps he's been pretending he isn't married, and you don't think I'm his lawful wife. Well, if you've any doubts, you can inquire at the Lambeth Registry Office; you'll find the entry all right. June, two years ago."

Elsinora departed without deigning to reply. Connie enjoyed her triumph.

"Well, my Irish princess," she thought, "I think I have settled accounts with you, and I could see by the way you took it that it was hard to swallow. And you were my rival — you're the one that comes between me and my lawful husband. But we shan't hear much more of you, I expect."

The remembrance of Elsinora's beauty, her consciousness that she herself could not compare with her, increased her satisfaction in what she had done. But she had no desire to meet Dick just then. She put on her hat and jacket, and left the house shortly after Elsinora had gone.

Elsinora could conceive of no calamity so great as that which had befallen her. Dick's death would have been as nothing compared with it. Death would not have taken him from her, but now in her first misery it seemed she had nothing to hope for in this life or any other; her ideal of love was broken; he had deceived her. If he had made a loveless marriage the bond which they had made at parting might still have been possible; but if this, why had he not told her? He had allowed her to think of him as unmarried, to believe that his heart was hers; whereas, for all she knew, he loved or had loved the other woman as much, perhaps more.

In the days following indignation helped her somewhat to bear her pain, and she thought more kindly of O'Connor and his devotion to her. Then her heart would plead for Dick, make excuses for him in not having told her of his marriage; he might yet be

able to explain, and they might yet be good friends, even more than good friends. But, however that might be, he was no longer to be thought of as she had thought of him lately,— as a lover who might induce her to break her promise to O'Connor and marry him. Her duty was clear now, she need fear no temptation; she would fulfil her promise and marry O'Connor and make the best of it all, sad though it was. But she was in no mood for amusement among her friends, and after leaving Somerford she paid but one other visit, and then returned to Ireland.

O'Connor had almost recovered his strength, and was again at work. He was full of patriotic schemes. It was his ambition to achieve something for Ireland of which Elsinora could be proud. He had always perceived that the bond between him and her was the cause of Ireland. As a mere individual who farmed a few acres of hereditary barrenness, and whose income was barely enough to buy her dresses alone, he knew that he was nothing to her. As a patriot he might be her lover. Constitutional agitation he held in contempt, nor was he fitted for political leadership; either he must do nothing and sink to insignificance, or stand in with the extreme party. He chose the latter course. This party, if party it could be called, whose organisation resembled that of those lower forms of animal life in which various nerve centres supply the place of brain, had shown increased signs of energy on the suppression

of the Land League. Numerous secret societies were established throughout the country and in America; it was from America that such inspiration as the party possessed seemed to be drawn; it was an American, one of the many who had been sent to Ireland for purposes of organisation, a crafty, intrepid man known as Captain Ring, who chiefly influenced O'Connor now.

O'Connor was nominated by the political society to which he belonged as one of the representatives on a mission to America. The plans proposed were daring, and involved certain details which he did not care to tell Elsinora; but she did not trouble him with questions.

When they met she had shown so little sign of joy in his presence that he had again given her an opportunity of withdrawing from her engagement. He told her he could be content to work and wait for years for her if he were in no doubt as to the end, but that he could not bear it if she threw him over after all. He spoke with great emotion. She did not withdraw her promise; she named the following spring, after his return from America, for the wedding, and placed a cold cheek at his disposal for endearment.

A few weeks after her return to Ballyvonaire letters came from her brother Nevil. They were full of praise of Tom Longfield, now Captain Longfield, to whose regiment, just home from India, he had been gazetted. He mentioned it as probable that he

would bring him over to Ballyvonaire for the grouse shooting in August. A few days later came a note from Dick to Elsinora, which stirred new agitation in her heart. He said that he knew she had heard of his marriage, but that she had only heard part of the truth: his marriage was no marriage. He reproached himself with not having told his dearest friend of his shipwreck; he said he must see her now; he would come to her if she would allow him; her friendship was all he had to live for. In consequence of this letter Dick was invited to join Tom Longfield at Ballyvonaire for the grouse shooting in August.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE ISLAND.

At the foot of the slope of grass in front of Ballyvonaire Castle was a gravelled walk, on one side of which was a flower garden, on the other a little quay. The blue inlet with its islands lay unruffled in September sunshine, ringed by the mountains.

At the edge of the quay Nevil Chillington and Tom Longfield were engaged in the sport of catching crabs with a broken cockle tied to the end of a string. The same crab, previously released, had been captured for the third time, to their great delight. Tom suddenly lost interest in the crab; his attention was claimed by Miss Chillington, who was getting into one of the boats at the end of the quay. Dick was her companion. He had arrived the day before, and in the evening, when the chance of half an hour alone with her was found, he had told her the whole story of Connie and his marriage. To-morrow he was off with the others to the mountains. This afternoon she had determined must be their own.

"Those two seem pretty thick," said Nevil, "and, I say, she knows how to use the sculls."

Tom would have preferred Elsinora's society to her brother's. The beauty of her figure as she rowed filled him with irritable admiration. If she were not going to marry that ragged Irishman, he thought, she would deserve his serious, most serious attention. She would have been a girl for whom it would be worth while to distinguish oneself, win the V.C., perhaps, and so forth.

"Got him again," said Nevil, bringing up the crab. Look here, Longfield! in the absence of my parent I am invested with authority, and I give either of you fellows a free hand to cut out this man O'Connor. You for choice, of course."

"Thanks," said Tom, "you're very good. In the meantime, if we are going to shoot rock pigeons, we may as well start."

Elsinora rowed towards the Island of Clogheen. Half-way across she stopped for a minute. The water was almost without a ripple; the sides of the great mountains and the islands, with their golden rings of seaweed, were reflected in blue depths.

"Now," she said, "hear an echo." She stood up in the boat and sang a mountain call, which she had learnt from a peasant girl among the Bavarian lakes.

Far away among the mountains, but perfectly distinct, the sweet voice answered.

"Again, please," Dick asked.

"I love an echo," she said; "it dies when it is

most beautiful, as everything should." She took the oars again; she would not let her eyes rest on Dick.

"I told you there was a burial-ground on the island," she said, as they drew nearer; "that's why it is called 'Clogheen.' A funeral procession of boats across the inlet is picturesque. There was a hermit there once. I always think of him as the chaunter in Coleridge's song, 'In a Chapel on the Shore.' Now I expect if you had lived long ago, and the world had got into your bad books, instead of going to the far west farming, you would have been a chaunter, and sung doleful masses in a place like this. Now wouldn't you, Mr. Malory?"

He could not enter into her gay mood. "I think you might as well call me Dick," he said.

"Well, *Dick*."

"That was the first time?"

"Yes, the first time out loud."

"You have called me Dick in fancy?"

"Yes, of course I have."

They reached the Island of many colours. Purple heather and golden furze bloom here met the blue waters, and dark green hollies and berried mountain ash-trees rose against the silver-clouded north. Westward a golden path ran seaward through the headlands of the inlet. Beneath the boat the rocks and stones were covered with pale green sea moss, and cool amber seaweed marked the high-water line among the gray pebbles on the shore. They ran the boat in alongside a shelf of rock which formed

a natural quay. Dick held Elsinora's hand far longer than was necessary as she stepped ashore. She did not withdraw it. That afternoon was to be their own; the clasp of hands was understood by both.

They went by shadowy ways to the ruined chapel, and walked to and fro on the grass between the roofless walls. It was a place in which they could feel that they were entirely alone, the world far away.

"You are my girl," Dick said, suddenly.

"Yes, I am your girl," she answered, simply, blushing at her own words.

Dick took her in his arms and kissed her. She yielded to him completely, and he knew that their souls were wedded. After long days of constraint, of passionate love which could find no outlet in expression, he felt the freedom and triumph of realisation; and she knew that the reserve was broken down between them: her soul was maiden no longer. A shy joy, a new-born shame, filled her. She hid her face against his shoulder.

So these two persons in Humphry's comedy were entering upon dangerous parts. His "Notes for a Comedy" declare that, though Love when the world was young did reckless deeds, went whither he would and became the father of Tragedy, all this is changed, and in these days Love has an eye for notice boards, fears to trespass, has become respectable, has wedded Expediency, and is the father of Comedy. But now for these two there was no thought of barriers, no memory of the wisdom of the discreet.

"I know now that I have been waiting all my life for that kiss," Dick said. "And you are mine, — my girl for ever.'

"For ever, dearest, in spite of everything."

"My life was shipwrecked. I seemed to have lost my soul, and I have found it in you."

"And I am yours."

"I have been picturing you to myself every day and every night, and now this is *you*," Dick said, glowing. "I have been thinking about this girl and dreaming about her, and now I must let myself go. I can't keep it in. She runs away from every woman I ever saw or heard of in everything. She is the noblest-hearted girl that ever made a man forget to think of himself. When you think of her you love your fellow-creatures, because she loves them. And she is so brave that you dare not be weak if you love her; and so warm-hearted, so beautiful, that to touch her hand is worth more than to kiss any other woman; and to kiss her could make a man hold up his head for ever among the eternal gods" — and here he must kiss her again, speech failing to express what he would.

They sat together on the grass-grown steps of the chancel, and their words were words befitting happy lovers who are not to be parted. To her, first, came a prospect of the parting of the ways.

"I ought not to be here with you, Dick," she said; "but this afternoon I can't be discreet — this one afternoon, — for perhaps we shall have to be parted

all the rest of our lives; but I will not think of it now. No, I will say with Rosalind, 'Come, woo me, woo me, for I am in a holiday humour, and like enough to consent.'"

Bands of sunshine fell on the grass at their feet through the west window, the breeze stirred the ivy on the walls, the ruined chapel was roofed with heaven.

"I have been ungrateful," he said. "I lost faith in life, and life has given me more than I deserve — more than I hoped for, dearest. I have been given more than any other man."

"Every other lover says that," she laughed.

But he insisted that his own good fortune was different from that of all others.

"Yes," she admitted, "our love is not ordinary love. When there are no barriers, and lovers can be married and happy ever after, there is no chance of such love as ours, which can triumph over all difficulties and separation and pain — but oh, Dick, I wish we were going to be married and happy ever after."

What could he say? The words he would speak were forbidden. He sprang to his feet, a sure sign that he was in danger of losing his head. He found no comfort in the promise of ideal love. The exquisite fact of her womanhood set his pulses racing as he looked at her. She also was moved; the love-light was in her eyes, but not the smile.

"Dearest," she said, "you must not kiss me again; not — not after to-day; not after we say good-bye."

"Good-bye to-day!" he echoed.

"Dick, you are going with the others to the mountains to-morrow. I think you had better not come back. You must help me to be true and honourable. It is as hard — I think it is harder for me than for you. You don't know, you can't know, how I love you!"

"My own sweetheart," he answered her, "I do know it."

The memory of his fetters chilled him; but even the knowledge that her love was utterly his could not impel him to ask a sensitive girl, a proud lady, to face the scorn of the world, of her friends, of the people she loved. She could not be called his wife; what would she be called? Separation might be borne, perhaps; but the thought of her marrying O'Connor was maddening.

"Elsinora," he said, after awhile, "you cannot marry me, but you must not marry this other man. I can bear anything but that."

She made no reply.

"He shall *not* marry you! I swear before God he shall not — if it cost me my life to prevent it."

She turned away from him, and leant against a little stone font which projected from the wall of the chapel, hiding her head against the curve of her arm. Her love for the man and her sense of honour were contending. If she were dishonourable and failed in her word, would their love, she thought, be any longer the noble love which now united them? The man she loved was at her side; the man she was

bound to was absent, and he trusted her. Later on, when Dick was the absent one and O'Connor near, the thought of marriage became intolerable, nay, impossible; but now she fought for her ideal. When she looked up her eyes did not meet his, they fell on the little font: raindrops had half filled it with holy water, wild clematis clustered about the stones. Her eyes filled with tears.

"Dearest," he said, "what is it?"

"Everything, Dick," she answered; "having to be true to my promise. I must, I must. Don't try to persuade me; it will break my heart if you do not help me to bear it."

"Ah!" he said, sadly, "you are in love with Love, and I am in love with you."

He was too manly to press her. She was in need of his help; he whispered brave words in her ear which again won her arms to his neck, and in the joy of the present he found comfort.

The shadows grew longer between the chapel walls; with the evening a little breeze sprang up, and wakened the voices of the island woods and of the island shores. The inlet was crisp with little waves, deep green, with flashes of crimson from the western skies, as they rowed home.

## CHAPTER X.

### HEROICS ON THE COMIC STAGE.

HUMPHRY WRIXON was satisfied that the familiar part, indeed the only part, in life which can with comfort or success be played by ordinary people is comedy, and that if they attempt the tragic, they will generally achieve anticlimax.

His hero was at this time led to attempt the heroic part on the comic stage, and was likely in consequence to become ridiculous to the sensible spectator. He had an opportunity of perceiving how his position appeared to a spectator when he explained it to Tom Longfield. They were alone in the room together. Nevil Chillington and Caroline were spending the evening with friends five miles distant. Elsinora had gone to her room pleading, with truth, a headache.

"What's the matter with you?" said Tom. "Did you have a row with Miss Chillington this afternoon, or what?"

They had fallen back into the old attitude of their boyhood towards each other. Tom the exponent of common sense, but Dick the ascendent influence.

"No," replied Dick, "I'm in an infernal scrape. I have to fight a duel with this man, O'Connor."

"Upon my word, you look as if you were not joking."

"Well, I'm not joking."

They both laughed the same laugh which they had won from each other by some absurdity long ago. But this was the last laugh the subject afforded. Dick grew excited as he gave particulars, and Tom's expression changed from incredulity to alarm.

It appeared that O'Conner had come home unexpectedly, and had seen Elsinora and Dick part at the quay on their return from the island. He had accused Dick of taking advantage of his absence to approach Miss Chillington; he had demanded an explanation of the interview of which he had seen the close.

"And you wouldn't answer him?" said Tom.

"No. I told him to go to the devil. I said I'd pitch him into the water if he didn't keep quiet."

"Well?"

"He brought it on himself; he deserved what he got. He wasn't content with abusing me, of saying it was what you might expect of Englishmen who first stole their lands and then tried to bring dishonour on their women, and all that sort of insolence, but he coupled our names in a way no man could stand. I forgot that he was weak after his illness, and I knocked him over."

"And then he challenged you?"

"Yes, he behaved better — he got cool, and said that we had better treat each other as gentlemen, and there was only one way left, and all that."

"And you mean to fight?" cried Tom.

"Of course."

Tom became severe. The Lieutenant Longfields of a generation or two back would have treated the modern objections to duelling with the same contempt as Tom showed for his friend's willingness to fight.

"I didn't think you were such a precious fool," he said. "Don't expect me to have anything to do with it. Nobody fights duels now but French journalists, who never try to hit each other. We must think of a way out of it; can't you apologise?"

"Not I. Do you think I'm a coward?" Dick replied, with irritation. "And he would not accept it if I did; we hate each other."

"Why on earth should you hate him?"

"Well, Miss Chillington is bound to marry him, or considers herself so, and it will spoil her life — and mine. It would be a blessed thing to shoot him, and prevent the sacrilege of his marrying her."

"Oh," said Tom, "that's a new light — we're rivals! No, I don't expect he will take an apology. When a man first cuts you out, and then knocks you down while you are too weak to resist, an apology hardly meets the case, especially if you're a sort of chieftain who lives in a two-roomed castle. And Miss Chillington?"

"Oh, don't ask me anything more about that, old fellow," said Dick.

"If you don't meet him," Tom said, meditatively, "you'll have to clear out at once, or he'll put one of those ruffians Nevil was saying he keeps about him to pot at you from behind a wall."

"Nonsense; he's an honourable man. That's not the point, and I want to fight him as much as he wants to fight me. If I shoot him," he continued, with excitement, "it would be a grand thing, but then I can't bring myself to do it. I hate him too much. I couldn't look at her afterwards. It would be like murdering him. He shall have first shot, and if I escape he shall have his life. But he shall give her her freedom in exchange for it. That's worth fighting for and risking one's life for, isn't it?"

"No, of course it isn't," said Tom; "no woman's worth it."

Sullivan brought in Captain Watson N. Ring's card for Mr. Longfield.

Captain Ring had received O'Connor's communication with as little approval as Tom had given to Dick's. He saw many objections to his friend fighting a duel. If he were killed, the chief supporter of the organisation in that part of the country would be lost; if he killed his opponent, it would be even worse. No good could result to them from his death, and it would be mistaken for a murder; the damage to the cause would be incalculable. He saw

immediately, however, that O'Connor could not be dissuaded from fighting, and the ingenious gentleman conceived a plan which appeared to overcome most of the objections he had to an ordinary duel.

The Captain's self-possession and affability were as marked as Tom's constraint and hauteur when they met. He took the chair which Dick had left, and opened his business at once.

"No doubt you're well aware what brings me here to-night, sir," he said, "and expected me, too. This is a very foolish affair. I assure you, personally, I regret it through and through."

"I suppose there's no way of stopping it?" asked Tom.

"Is your friend pious?"

"No."

"Well, if he can't love his enemy enough to make a real downright humble apology, and promise to clear out of the country, and never again come fooling around after the girl, it's no good. O'Connor's not one of those gentlemen who take out County Court summonses."

"Mr. Malory has no intention of apologising," said Tom.

Now that Dick's honour was in his hands, he replied as he knew his friend would wish.

"Can your friend shoot?" asked Captain Ring.

"Yes, sir, he can."

"Well, O'Connor's just a dead shot; he can't miss, and that's on my mind. I will treat you as a friend.

O'Connor means to shoot Malory, and if he does it means his own ruin and playing the devil with the work we have in hand. We're the enemies of your country, but you and me may treat each other as friends — it's our mutual interest. I don't want O'Connor to be shot, and I don't want him to shoot Mr. Malory, and you don't either."

"I don't understand," said Tom, unbending, "what can be done. You say Mr. O'Connor means revenge. If anything can be done, in God's name let us do it."

"Do you mind my smoking this," said Ring, producing a cigar and lighting it; "I shall want a few minutes to explain. Now, tell me, did you ever hear of a thing called an American duel?" Tom shook his head. "Well, Mr. Longfield, we invented it, — I am an American by birth — though the Germans have taken it up more than us. We're an enlightened nation, sir; we're in the front of civilisation. What is there marks progress like the conditions of fighting? It's always getting a bit fairer than it was. It used to be strength, then strength went down before skill. If you read your Testament you know the story of young David and Goliath of Gath city. That was a duel, if you like. Goliath never got near him; he hadn't a chance."

"Well?" said Tom, impatiently.

"Well, sir, the advantage of strength was at an end; skill took its place. Tournaments, and swords, and pistols, it's all the same. Size counted for noth-

ing. A big man was handicapped; there was a better mark for his enemy to shoot at. Things got a bit fairer, but they were not fair yet. A good cause don't always mean a cool hand and a good eye. Now, in the duel we invented, both parties start on the same footing; strength, or skill, or nerve, or nothing counts; it's equal chances. It's decided by fate. You did not hear, maybe, of Count Schandau's suicide last year, sir?"

The Captain paused and puffed at his cigar.

"No, I don't see what you are driving at, for the life of me."

"Well, that was a case. It's a simple thing. Instead of shooting at each other you shake a box of dice or cut a pack of cards, and the loser quietly commits suicide within a given time — say twelve months."

Tom drew a long breath. "I call it a cold-blooded piece of villainy," said he.

"You look all round it," said the Captain. "To begin with, each starts fair. Then we haven't got the body to deal with. There's no public reproach on the man who wins. Nobody knows about it. Twelve months afterwards another man quietly commits suicide, or meets with an accident. It need not look like suicide if he's cute. But look here, my friend, the strongest point of all, the one you and I've got to consider's this — it leaves a very good opening for patching the thing up. I tell you, O'Connor will shoot Malory if it's pistols, unless he

gets shot himself. If it's dice, and he wins, he may make terms. He may say 'Your life's your own, if you apologise in a certain time' — I won't answer for it, but I say the betting's on it. I can't persuade him now to give it up, but I can do a good deal with him, and the betting is on my getting him to accept an apology after a bit. If a man likes to knock another man down, and prefers death to apologising, he can blame no one but himself. If your man wins, he can make his terms if he likes, or he can be generous and give him his life, or he can make him go through with it. You mayn't like it, and if you have anything better to suggest now's your time."

"Have you said anything to Mr. O'Connor about the plan?" Tom asked.

"I've had a solid hour with him about it, and he agrees. At first he wouldn't look at it, but I put it to him that our cause would suffer as much by his killing Malory and getting us the name of murdering an innocent Englishman as if he were shot himself. I told him that if he shot her friend, Miss Chillington would never look at him again, and he gave in. I tell you it is for our advantage, or I wouldn't suggest it, and I tell you it is for yours too, if you value your friend's life."

"I consider you have acted very straightforwardly with me," said Tom, "and what you say is certainly worth consideration, though I am afraid Mr. Malory will not consent to the plan. If you will allow me, I will leave you for a short while and consult him."

"Don't you hurry," said the Captain; "I can wait here as long as you like. If you agree, well, there's no reason why we shouldn't settle the whole thing right away to-night instead of having to get up to-morrow morning. Thank you, sir, whiskey, please."

Dick was waiting, restless and excited. In spite of the warm expression of love which he had won from Elsinora, he had seen that she regarded their separation in life as inevitable, and that her ideals of duty and love were beckoning her to the sacrifice. The thought of fighting a duel, which he would at another time have ridiculed, now became to him attractive and exhilarating. He longed for activity. He would be fighting in her cause. If he were killed, what would it matter. If he escaped, and could give O'Connor his life and make him free Elsinora then — heavenly prospects opened to that alternative.

He was disturbed in this somewhat exalted mood by Tom. The arguments of Captain Ring had gone home; but in truth, though O'Connor had once been a good shot, since his accident his hand had become shaky, and Ring knew it. Tom, however, believed that if pistols were used Dick's life was doomed. He saw a safe loophole of escape in a compromise and apology after time had sobered the combatants. He became the advocate of the plan, pointing out to Dick the positive advantage it would be if he were to win and could offer O'Connor his life in exchange for Miss Chillington's freedom. But it was not the force

of these arguments which induced Dick to consent; he was decided by Tom's allusion to his people.

"Suppose you are shot to-morrow morning," he said, "what about Nan? what about all of them? It will embitter their lives; they would feel you had been murdered, whereas in the other case, even if the very worst happened — "

"I had forgotten that," said Dick; "it might be better."

"And if you agree," Tom said, "there is the advantage of getting it over at once, to-night. I shall tell Ring we will go."

And so it was settled.

Tom arranged with Ring that they would be at O'Connor's house, which was obviously the best place for the meeting, in half an hour, and they parted with expressions of mutual good feeling. But as Tom retired to join Dick he felt none of that elation which filled the Captain's soul as he briskly walked homewards.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE DUEL.

O'CONNOR'S house lay in the gloom of its little belt of fir-trees; behind rose the bare mountain-side, a dark wall up to the starlight. The loneliness was profound; there was no sign of life about the house; nevertheless it was full of unrest and watchfulness within and without.

There had been a meeting that night of members of the secret society over which O'Connor presided. Its sentries, hidden among the dark approaches, had reported the coming of two tall strangers in ulsters — which might indeed conceal uniforms, — and had been instructed to let them pass. It was known among the members assembled what was going forward.

Four of them were now gathered about the door of an inner room in silence, intently listening for every sound which came from the outer room adjoining. Three others were outside, looking through a window into the room.

The four actors in this game of life and death, this modern, civilised, cold-hearted, last descendant of old heroic combat, were standing round a bare table in

the middle of the room. Ring, who, in spite of some inward restlessness, preserved his usual manner, was briefly stating the conditions to be agreed. O'Connor's face was flushed, and he showed signs of impatience. There was desire for vengeance, no fear, in his look. Dick was pale, but admirably cool; the strength of heart which had failed in the common struggle of life came out in emergency. Tom Longfield was the only one of them who betrayed any nervousness. His hand shook as he took the box of dice which Ring gave him to examine. He was capable of facing danger which might win a Victoria Cross, but this business unmanned him.

"I think that we understand everything, gentlemen," said Ring. "The victor may, of course, grant the loser his life on conditions, if he thinks fit. We ask from you no other pledge — I speak with Mr. O'Connor's approval — that the conditions will be solemnly carried out than the honourable promise of a gentleman. I suppose this from him will be equally satisfactory to you, sir?"

Tom nodded.

"And there is one other point. It is to be understood that everything which takes place here to-night will be kept secret. It is essential, and one of the advantages of the arrangement, that no public reproach on the survivor will be possible. Well, that is understood." He added with a grin, "The arrangement has also the advantage of not being sudden in its result. We don't want a doctor or a priest, and

we have a whole year to prepare for another world, and — "

"Never mind," interrupted O'Connor, "there is nothing more to say."

"No," said Ring, "there is nothing. No doubt you will wish to go through the ordinary formality of shaking hands before the encounter" — he addressed Dick specially.

"I see no reason," he replied, "why we should go through any such farce."

"I too," said O'Connor, "prefer to keep my hand for my friends."

The box was handed to Dick first. It had been agreed that there should be three throws each. Not a word was spoken. The eyes at the window were eagerly straining for a view of the table; the faces at the door were a study of suppressed excitement.

Dick's first throw gave 4 and 3. Ring named the numbers and wrote them down. O'Connor threw 3 and 5. Dick's second throw gave 6 and 1. O'Connor threw 3 and 5 again; he was therefore two to the good.

Tom Longfield was as pale as death as he waited for the final throw; they were the most horrible moments he had ever experienced. Even Ring showed signs of agitation. The listeners at the door held their breath; the house was as silent as if it were empty. Dick threw 5 and 4, and the box was handed to O'Connor, who hesitated a minute before casting. He showed some signs of the gambler's

superstition; he changed the box from one hand to the other, and, as if by a sudden inspiration, gave it an additional shake just as he was about to throw.

"Fives, by God!" said Ring.

The four men stood for a moment in silence with their eyes riveted on the dice. A sudden movement was made by the men at the door, but the noise escaped notice.

Dick drew a long breath. He was the first to speak.

"Come," he said to Tom, "there is nothing more."

"There is nothing more," said Ring, "unless Mr. O'Connor has any terms of compromise to propose. You will note that this is the thirteenth day of September," he took out his watch, "and it is half-past eleven o'clock."

The blood sprang to Tom's head. "You mean then," he cried, "to exact the uttermost. Suppose we refuse to be bound by this damnable compact, which we were fools to have anything to do with, what hold have you got on us?"

It was not well spoken, but he hardly knew what he was saying. Dick angrily told him to be silent.

"We consider the word of a gentleman quite sufficient hold," remarked Ring to Tom. "Well, sir, as you have raised the point, I'll just add that there is another hold. I apologise to Mr. Malory for mentioning it, but you have forced it on me. We are members of a secret society — you see we still treat you as an honourable man, and have no fear of

your informing, — and there are members in that society who would see to it that the sentence was carried out, if it were unexecuted on the thirteenth of next September."

"We will not insult Mr. Malory by any such talk," said O'Connor curtly. "I have something myself to say, however." He spoke with dignity, but there was a look of triumph and hostility in his eye which he could not control. "I have no wish for your death, and it rests with yourself whether you live or not. I give you your life on these terms: that you apologise for your conduct of this afternoon; that you leave Ireland, and never again set foot on our shores; that you swear never again, as long as you live, to see Miss Chillington or write to her, or communicate with her in any way. I will go further; if you will promise this, I will forego the apology."

Tom breathed a sigh of relief, and looked up eagerly.

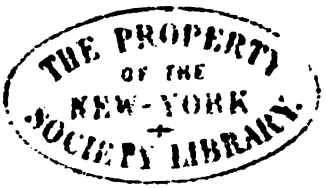
"No," said Dick, with decision. "I will promise nothing; indeed, it is my intention to do everything in my power to prevent your marying Miss Chillington."

"Well," said O'Connor slowly, "your blood will be upon your own head. I give you terms which are reasonable, easy, lenient they might be called. You have crossed my path. I have risked my life to you. You have lost, and you must choose for yourself between death and obedience to these conditions."

Dick bowed, and prepared to leave.

"You have a year for consideration," O'Connor continued. "If you think better of it, I shall be prepared to hear from you. Remember I do not want your life, and your blood will be on your own head."

Ring opened the door, and the two old friends went out together into the darkness.




# THE MARPLOT.

## PART III.

## CHAPTER I.

### A NEW ASPECT OF A DESPISED WORLD.

EVERYONE'S conduct is shaped to a greater extent by artificial conditions, fettered more often by unseen bonds than the world believes. For many a man such restraints are giving an undercurrent of tragedy to his whole life, while he is meeting the world with the air of one well pleased. For him, for instance, who knows that he has missed his mark, who must forsake the work he loves for the work he despises, in order to support those who depend upon him; for him who sees the maiden of his dreams when it is too late, and there are barriers between them. These may live in a free country, and seem to be free men, but they go to the grave fettered: the only paths they care to tread are barred to them.

Dick's fortune differed in degree, not in kind, from that of thousands. Artificial restraints had been imposed on him in exceptional measure. To the unnatural bonds of his marriage and the barrier of Elsinora's engagement had been added his obligation to O'Connor. His nature was intolerant of restraints; he rebelled against them one and all, and

the only path which gave any semblance of freedom led to death.

During the first days following the duel one thing only was clear in his mind: there was to be no compromise, no dream of agreeing to O'Connor's conditions, no accepting orders from another man as to his relationship with the woman he loved. He chose freedom for a short period rather than bondage for life. He would have accepted death by torture at this time rather than humiliate himself before his enemy or sacrifice his right to endeavour to prevent him from marrying Elsinora.

Indeed a curious part had fallen to the hero of a comedy, — one which Humphry would have seen pointing to a final exhibition of ridiculous anticlimax rather than tragedy. But not so Dick: the emotions born of the realisation of impending death had not yet been felt; his imagination displayed for him what he would win in sacrificing his life, and did not now concern itself with the cost. It was later on that the great question would arise: whether his love of life or his love of a woman were the stronger.

Early on the morning after the duel he had started for the mountains with the other men, but he was too restless to remain with them shooting. Tom Longfield arranged to meet him a week or two later at Farinder, and said good-bye to him, fully believing that before long he would be ready to accept O'Connor's most reasonable conditions.

Dick went homeward to Farinder now as he had first set out when he went to face the world, on foot, and when near the end of his journey he struck into the road by which he had previously travelled. He had wished to be alone to reflect on his position; he had faced it steadfastly, and his life began to adjust itself to its new conditions. The days of tramping through the country in bright sunshine had brought some quiet to his disturbed thoughts; he had looked curiously and with strange interest at the beauty of the life of the world around him, which he was to leave so soon. The first feverishness had burned itself out; he seemed to have awakened from a dream. It was the evening after he had reached familiar country, and was nearing the end of his day's journey, that an idea, which grew into a resolution, came to him as an inspiration. It was this: that his death should be a great one, that it should serve some noble end.

The idea possessed him so strongly that he could not rest. After taking some refreshment at the inn, where he had purposed to remain until next morning, he suddenly changed his plans, and set out to walk during the night. He felt no fatigue; his aroused imagination spurred him onward. He was no longer the same man who scorned himself and the world, and sorrowed over lost illusions. He would not be conquered and lose his life tamely. He would do something of which all who loved him — of which Elsinora — could be proud.

Here was a theme for his imagination: to be bound by nothing which commonly shapes men's lives, not even to the necessity of preserving his life. His dream of death had no fixed shape; it was vaguely in some great cause, vaguely dramatic. The opportunity of heroism, the lack of which in modern life he had so often mourned, was now afforded. Of difficulties came not a thought. The miserable failure of the last few years would be cancelled by the end; the barriers which had been set between him and love would be carried away. He would exchange the right of living in intolerable bonds for the privilege of dying the death of godlike men. And the heroic figure he cut before himself was almost compensation for the penalty.

Every turn of the dark road was now familiar to him. He passed a silent village; it was only ten o'clock, but its day was complete. Here and there a light remained in a cottage window, but most of its simple inhabitants were already asleep. The ploughing of the field, the tending of the cattle, the old round of laborious duties had been gone through with, perhaps, just at this time the stimulating variety of cider-making added; and the night brought rest. These good, round, honest, English pates, little vexed with dreams, lay shelved a-row for the night; the story of human life here written, as it were, in words of one syllable, sleeping with the sleepers.

Beyond the village he took a track which led off

the main road up over the hills in the direction of Farinder. From the heights of the bare dark heath was won a vast horizon; all that was visible of the world was the ring of darkness which began where the starlight ceased; the starlight was above and around and beneath; the earth itself was but the resting point from which to look into the starry spaces of the universe. No homely cloud of the earth's fashioning, no sound of its voices, not even of the wind, touched the silence of the everlasting day of the heavens. Night is a child of the kind earth, darkness a thing of human eyes; but neither night nor darkness have a meaning in that reign of the eternal deeps.

Never before had the wonder and glory of creation so fully taken possession of him. And now it seemed to him as a marvel how, in any circumstances, it could have been possible for him to see life as a common thing, to take for granted, or despise, or howl about. He looked back upon years of revolt, of indifference, of complaint, as incomprehensible. Now that he was destined to say farewell to the earth and its conditions of life, the joy and beauty of this first home in the universe was shown to him again with even more than its early charm.

And would it not be a consoling thing if it might be given to us to behold the young gentleman of our day who solemnly asks the question, "Is life worth living?" allotted one year of life — he being the while in his customary condition of good health and

ease — one year of life, with sentence to depart at its end? Life the gray would then shine for him so rosily, he would pipe so pathetic an eye for the daily food of existence. Or still better to mark under the same sentence our well-to-do complacent citizen who has converted the temple of his soul into a strong room, and has neglected his opportunity of enjoying the earth's sunshine and laughter. Would this not shove him off his patch of mud? Would not this one year of life teach him more than he had learned of all the others? And you, my sweet Christian dowager! who impertinently abuse the kind earth and censure the human heart, such a sentence might give you the lesson in thankfulness and charity which your much frequenting of churches fails to teach you.

Dick walked on steadily through the night without meeting a human being. Now and then some distant sound reached him from the hidden valleys — the bark of a dog, or a clock striking the hour, far remote. He passed a heath cutter's cottage, and looked in at the window, from which a glimmer of light shone; the room was empty, and a log of wood still smouldered on the hearth. Farther on some cattle lay on a slope of grass sheltered by furze bushes; they lifted their heads but did not move as he passed. The world was asleep, wrapped in forgetfulness, a shade in the lustre of the universal worlds, a pause in the eternal wakefulness of the heavens.

Towards morning, but while it was still dark, he came to the end of the path across the moorland, and entered the cultivated country. He began at last to feel the fatigue of his long walk, and desire for sleep came to him also. After the excitement of the thoughts which had occupied him, he was weary in mind as well as body. He was only ten miles from Farinder now, but could go no farther. A hayloft in some farm buildings offered shelter, and here he slept till the stars were hidden and the earth had again found the sunshine.

When he awoke the sunlight was streaming in through the round window of the loft across the loose hay; cheerful sounds of the farmyard greeted him; hunger assailed him. Oh, but it was good to be hungry, pleasant to see the sunshine in the hay, and hear the cattle munching their food in the stall underneath, and the labourers' voices in the yard! It was homely, human; it gave a sense of fellowship. The mystery of the solemn depths of the universe, of the stars and their companies, was lost. Here was the kind old earth flooded with sunshine. The exaltation of noble death, of kinship with the immortals, lost glory in the laughter of the autumn morning. Life was good; the earth was generous; the grave was cold.

Hunger, the mother of enterprise, drove Dick into the farmhouse. As it is known that criminals on the morning of execution often partake of a hearty breakfast, it can be easily believed that the sentence

of death, a year ahead, did not interfere with his appetite now. Amongst the many modern maladies from which he suffered were not included the two most rampant, indigestion and theological colic; and the former immunity now permitted him to make an irresponsible meal of fat bacon and rough cider. His progress afforded real pleasure to his hostess. After breakfast he lighted his pipe and sat on the warm stone steps of the barn talking to the farmer's three little children. Death seemed very remote.

As he went his way quietly along the familiar road, the pure luxury of living stole over him. Everywhere was something to rejoice in; all common sights and sounds grew dear. All that had been passed by formerly with the unconscious comment, "You are always here. Some day I shall make your better acquaintance," now replied, "You are going and will never know us now." When he bade good-bye to the farmer's children and one said, "When will you come again and tell us the other story?" he said, "Some day," with a feeling of pain.

Oh, it was good to be alive! Good to see the sowing of the ground, and think of the wonderful presence of life which would make the brown earth green again. Pleasant to see the blue smoke of the weed fire curling against the hedgerow, to watch the starlings feeding among the flocks of sheep, to hear the caw of the rooks, the hum of the threshing machine, to smell the bracken and feel the cool autumn wind blowing up out of the north-west.

Presently, on the open country to the right, he saw a stag racing down the wind towards the moor, and the hounds full cry on his track; then stag and hounds and huntsmen were lost in a hollow. Over the down in front other riders, out of the running, were coming up. People he knew would be amongst them without doubt; he had an odd feeling of shame at the thought of meeting them. Young men of the world, hale squires, yeomen, merry dames, store-keepers of British sporting tradition and British soundness of nerve, cheery folk, well equipped and horsed, and confident in themselves; there was something antagonistic between his condition and theirs. He turned aside to avoid meeting them, but three of the riders came diagonally across his path. He recognised Margaret Longfield and stood still, but she did not notice him as she passed. No sweeter picture of maidenhood could be seen than this girl galloping across the hill on her thoroughbred. Her face was radiant; she was smiling at something her companion had said. Dick had but a glimpse of her face now, but her smile brought back many memories. He mused lovingly on her smile. There was a sparkle of fun in her eyes when she smiled which gave suggestion of breezy days in spring-time, and made her expression as different from that of mere sweetness as the smell of sweet-briar is different from the lily's.

The sight of her filled Dick with sadness. Her happiness, her healthful joy of life, stood as a barrier

between him and her. Here was the girl he loved better than all his other friends, and she was light-hearted and content, and he was doomed to death and could tell her nothing of his secret, nor hope for her sympathy. He must go his dark way to the end alone. Something of self-pity was excusable. His mood of exaltation could not be maintained, and his manful determination to meet his fate bravely lost nothing of its strength, that his heart was melted at the touch of old sweet love which must be left.

He went on his way, thinking sadly of those he loved and of what his death would mean to them. Their love was, after all, the great possession, the best that life had given, the hardest to relinquish. He remembered the belief which Elsinora had expressed to him, that man was made immortal by Love, that Love was the part of his nature which was rooted outside himself, and that he would some day find again his own life treasured for him in the soul of everything he had loved on earth. It was a pleasant faith enough; but to him it was a mere idle speculation, and there was reality in having to leave the dear friends and knowing no part in their years of life on the kind old earth, and sharing no further fellowship with them in the old familiar paths. It was hard to think of them — of Nan who loved him so deeply, who had no other near one left, and poor old Clovis, and Tom, and the old folks at Farinder, and Margaret, his sweet friend. The nearing home, the thought of meeting them, made it real. But

Elsinora! if Elsinora had been dead, then he could have lived, ay, and in spite of sadness, have loved what remained; but with Elsinora another man's wife, no. The contemplation of it was a scourge; it gave him sharp pain instead of the melancholy in which he had been dreaming; it quickened his pace and darkened his brow. His death must prevent that possibility, his sacrifice must be the means somehow of achieving her freedom. Some way must be found; there must be no delay; he would say farewell to his dear ones, and then to his enterprise.

The old village of Farinder lay quiet in the afternoon sunshine as he passed through it. The broad grass-grown street was almost empty. Outside the post-office Squire Longfield, on horseback, was talking to the Misses Mosscrop, maiden ladies of the village. Dick would gladly have avoided them, but was pulled up by a loud "Hullo" from the Squire.

"Damned, if it isn't Dick Malory."

Whereupon the Misses Mosscrop exchanged glances which conveyed to each other the mutual assurance that they had heard and deprecated the expression, but were agreed that allowances should be made for old-fashioned gentlemen like the Squire.

"And you're not hunting, sir?" said Dick, after the ladies had been greeted, and had retired to the post-office.

"No, my boy; I had a spill last Tuesday in a forest run, and my joints are as stiff as a crab's. I'm getting old. Funny thing, only last night Peggy and I

were talking about you, and here you are. When will you come over and dine? Not to-night, of course; they'll want you at home. To-morrow? Wednesday? and mind, bring the whole family. Oh, you were over in Ireland with Tom. I've just had a telegram; he'll be here to-morrow, too."

Dick started. "Will he? How jolly! I forgot to ask how every one is."

"Couldn't be better. Humphry getting too fat; but why doesn't the fellow ride? The dear old man is just the same as ever, and all mine are well, thank God. My sweetheart, Nan, is a little too pale to please me, but she gets prettier every day. Keep your eye on her, and don't let her throw herself away. Young Leonard, the second one, the barrister, seems rather fond of looking in at the Priory lately, and he's a fellow I can't abide. But I think she can take care of herself. She's mighty dignified when she likes."

"Give my love to them all," said Dick; "I may walk over to-morrow."

"Good-bye, my boy," said the Squire; "and, look here, go to bed early, and eat as much as you can while you're down here. You don't look up to the mark, eh? Too much work, eh? or late hours in London, or what?" The Squire rode off, with the hearty laugh of one from whom life has no riddles.

Mr. Wrixon and Nan were walking up and down on the path in front of the house when Dick appeared at the gate below. When he was alone the old

man's face was stern; when Nan was at his side it was always softened, just as the cold, gray stone of the Priory grew mellow in sunshine; in many ways he was like the old building. In the midst of placid talk — he was telling her things of long ago, in the time of her own mother's youth — she sighted her brother and pointed, "Look!" then she jumped the terrace bank, and rushed down to him at a pace which was very unusual with this demure maiden.

"Dick!" she cried, with her arms round his neck. "My dear, dear old boy; my dear, dear old boy!"

It was hard to bear; his eyes were dim as they walked together to the house, hand in hand.

That evening he could not disguise the pain at his heart. His attempts at cheerfulness broke down. Nan looked at him wistfully from time to time, and said little. Humphry was assured that some sorrow of which they knew nothing had overtaken him. He and Dick smoked a pipe together after the others had gone to bed. It was the hour when Humphry had been most given to indulge in speech, but to-night he said little. He spoke of Nan and Mr. Wrixon and old friends, but asked no questions. The old basset-hound lay between them on the hearth in the flickering firelight. The flutter of the wind in the great chimney had a kind, familiar voice to Dick. How good it would have been to live through the mellow years in this old corner of the world, if only love and life might have remained together.

"Humphry," he said, just as he was going, "life is very difficult."

"You take it so seriously, old chap," replied Humphry.

"It is a world in which no path is clear, not even the path of duty. Happiness and duty cannot dwell together, and love must be sacrificed to honour, or honour to love. Nothing seems worth having except that which we may not possess; and it is only when what we have is taken from us that we know that it was good. It is a hopeless mixture, a wild scheme, Humphry, a sad comical creation, and I enter my protest against it."

"Oh, it's all right," said Humphry, "if you don't take it seriously."

## CHAPTER II.

### THE BALL.

THERE was dancing at the Manor-House; the whole country-side was invited to say farewell to a gallant young soldier departing to the wars; for the Soudan campaign had begun, and Tom Longfield's regiment was under an immediate order to embark. The ball was also to commemorate Nan's formal presentation to the world. It is an important event, this "coming out"; it proclaims to all that the young lady is now ready to undertake the responsibility of love and housekeeping. A young man must work for the badge; with much difficulty obtains he these fetters; he goes from the irresponsible to the responsible position through examinations or on an office stool; but a maiden in one night dances from one to the other. It is well.

It was a windy October evening. Humphry Wrixon and Dick walked over together to the Manor-House after dinner. Dick could not resist speaking the thought uppermost in his mind.

"Supposing," he said, casually, "you wanted to die for the good of your race at the present time, how would you do it?"

"Do not make sport of your uncle," Humphry replied.

"Well, not you, then, but any man who felt capable of it."

"He couldn't do it. Heroism isn't wanted. Fancy our ordinary man offering his life to his country. It reminds me of your Socialist friend who offered his property in Ireland to the Government, in order that they might nationalise it, and they wouldn't have it." Humphry chuckled at the recollection. "Of course," he continued, "if he were very anxious to do a little private heroism he might join a fire brigade, and, after a gallant rescue, perish in the burning ruin; or he might study the meteorological reports, and when he saw a 'V-shaped depression' approaching our islands, go down to the coast on the chance of getting a seat in a lifeboat; or he might offer himself to a hospital for the doctors to try their new medicines on. You see it would depend so much upon how he was situated; if, for instance, he had a life interest in property, which reverted on his death to a charity, the noblest thing he could do would be to commit suicide, and many poor people would reap an immediate advantage."

"Exactly," said Dick. "There is no room to-day for great deeds which stir the heart of a nation. Joan of Arc would be put in a lunatic asylum."

"Very properly," said Humphry.

"Lucretia would live, and Collatinus would go to the divorce court. Latimer and More would have

reasoned out their position in magazine articles. We reckon progress by exports and imports. We are more comfortable perhaps; we have exchanged heroism for comfort. If we endeavoured to be heroic, we should become ridiculous. Well, Humphry, can you suggest any more heroic death than the new medicines?"

"No, sir. This, thank God, is, as you say, not a heroic age. The heroism has been done for us in the past, and we are permitted to contemplate it artistically treated. I mean the old sort of heroism. There is a new domestic sort, which does not prance and plunge and rush madly onward, but pulls a heavy load quietly uphill."

"Made a drudge of, in fact."

"Not necessarily. It seems to me that, in the present day, a man who would serve his fellow-men must be content to do so by living for them, not by dying for them."

"Yes," assented Dick. "I think that's right, if in doing so you are not afraid to lose your life. A soldier can still be heroic in the old sense."

"Oh yes, here and there; but modern war is not heroic. Look at the Egyptian War just over. Some of our men may have behaved very well, and the Arabs were simply glorious, but what heroism was there in shooting down savages with machine guns for the benefit of Egyptian bondholders?"

"Yes, I know; but this new campaign seems to me quite a different thing."

"What? The rescue of Gordon which our chivalrous Government has put off until it was driven to it by fear of the ignorant voter. Yes, this promises to be exciting."

"I wish to God I was with Gordon in Khartoum to-night," said Dick.

"You will find waltzing and supper far more comfortable," Humphry replied, somewhat startled by his nephew's speech.

The heroic was left behind with the darkness of the windy night when they entered the bright house and heard the sound of music.

Generations had danced in the inner hall at Farinder. In old times of minuet and country dance, when the dark walls were less brilliantly lighted and the guests were fewer, it might have been more picturesque than now; but in spite of modern improvements and the monotony of waltzing and male attire, a dance in the long hall, with its recesses and deep windows, retained a suggestion of the old world, and the girls were nothing behind their ancestresses in beauty or picturesqueness of apparel.

Humphry was presently to be observed in a recess, hemmed in by chaperons. His imprisonment caused great delight to the Squire, and its duration became the subject of a bet between him and a neighbour. But Humphry showed no signs of uneasiness.

"All the people one knows are here," said chaperon number one to a friend, "and all the people one does not know also. Some very odd-looking people

— the Longfields *are* so friendly. That, my dear, is Sir Henry Fusp, the new judge; one of his sons is at Harrow with Gerald."

"Yes, I have seen him," said number two; "a dear boy. Did you notice Margaret Longfield's dress? How well she is looking! I really think she must be twenty-four; at all events, not a day less than twenty-three; and why she is not married amazes me; there is money too."

A third lady addressed Humphry. "It is really a charming sight, don't you think, Mr. Wrixon? It makes one feel quite young again to watch the young people. And you ought to be dancing yourself, you know; but you are such a recluse, one never sees you anywhere. Let me introduce you to my friend, Mrs. Clapton Crosby. Anna, Mr. Wrixon knows all about literature, and I am sure he will be interested in hearing about your dear girl's poems."

"I should so much like to talk to you about them," said Mrs. Crosby, "and ask your advice. All our friends think she ought to publish, and I want to know the right way to set about it. Gladys has talent, I know, though I suppose one ought not to say so. Our vicar says it is genius."

"It is generally easy to distinguish them," said Humphry. "Are your daughter's poems comprehensible?"

"On the contrary, Mr. Wrixon, even her own father confesses to being baffled."

"Well, madam, there is not the slightest doubt she has genius."

"I am so glad to hear you say so. Now, do tell me, are you acquainted with any good publisher?"

"One," said Humphry, "if he is still in the business. He is here to-night. My nephew is acquainted with him."

"Dear me, how odd! I did not know publishers were people one could know — except in business, that is. But nowadays it is quite fashionable for gentlemen to go into trades, is it not?"

"There he is," said Humphry, grinning, "standing near the fire-place."

"What! the tall distinguished-looking man with the discontented expression?"

"Yes. Publishing, I fancy, is a depressing business."

"Oh, do bring him over! I should so like to introduce him to Gladys."

"I shall be delighted," replied Humphry. "The whole thing might be settled at supper, and arrangements made as to the profits and so on. I see he is going to dance with Miss Longfield, but I will seize him for you directly."

"That is really kind of you. Now, tell me — you seem to know everybody — who is that most extraordinary-looking person who is dancing with poor dear Brunhilda Way? Mary," she whispered to her friend, "do look at the creature who is dancing with poor dear Brownie."

"That gentleman," said Humphry, in his most solemn tone, "is Mr. Clovis Cloudesley Shovel, a

rising artist, a most conscientious dancer, a friend of mine, madam. He is staying at our house. I will endeavour to secure the publisher."

Humphry escaped.

Clovis was suffering horribly; so was his partner. His heart had been fluttered by an invitation to the ball, sent at Dick's request; he had taken some dancing lessons with the object of qualifying himself to dance with Margaret Longfield, and when they met, and he was just summoning up courage to ask her to waltz, she had introduced him to Miss Way and left him. It was his virgin effort — a desperate ten minutes. The burden of having at the same time to remember the step, to carry out the instructions of his mistress to keep his right knee unbent, to glide, to avoid giddiness by not looking on the ground, and to recognise the existence of his companion, were almost overwhelming. When he felt that he ought to make an attempt at conversation he found himself internally counting one, two, three, four, five, six; and then he trod on her toe, and blushed and apologised. He was not at all sorry that his partner said she was tired and proposed to sit down during the remainder of the waltz.

Nan was in great request.

"By gad, Wrixon, my little sweetheart is the prettiest girl in the room," said the Squire. Mr. Wrixon looked at her with affectionate pride.

"She reminds me very much of her mother to-night, Longfield."

"Then her mother must have been a deuced handsome woman. She is like Dick — a little — when he doesn't look so infernally grumpy. Can't make out what's the matter with the fellow. But Nan, she's the girl for me, and between you and me, Wrixon, I wish she'd take a fancy to Tom."

"Oh," said Mr. Wrixon, rather testily, "she's a child."

"She's a very dignified young woman, sir. Well, we can't arrange these things as we want always, but Tom's a good boy, Wrixon;" and Mr. Longfield walked away rather hurt at the apparent want of response from his old friend to his wish for a closer bond between the families.

Tom was, for reasons not apparent, very cross. Humphry found him standing at the door frowning furiously.

"You look serious, my boy," he said; "thoughts of the coming fray? It must remind you of the Duchess of Richmond's ball before Waterloo; the vivid imagination may almost hear the roar of the field amid the sound of revelry by night."

Tom growled out a laugh, and asked him if he knew the gentleman with whom his niece was dancing so much, and who had just passed with her.

Humphry named him as a young barrister of promise.

"Dismal-looking prig," said Tom.

"Really," said Humphry, "I think he is rather

beautiful to look at. I fancy he is *épris*. He came down on purpose for the ball, I believe."

Humphry thought he had spied marks of jealousy in Tom, and it delighted him to incite it further. Why was not Tom dancing with her himself, instead of running down those who did? He was to be treated as a laggard; his love, if it existed, required to be pricked with jealousy, as a stubborn ass which the small boy persuades forward by placing a furze bush beneath its tail.

Tom at last found his way to Nan.

"I'm afraid I have nothing left," she said; "you came in so late."

"I had important business," said Tom, deeply offended.

"Uncle Humphry said you must be sharpening your sword," observed Nan, laughing.

"Then Uncle Humphry may mind his own business."

"Well," said Nan, "don't be cross, Tom, for I have some dances left, though I might have filled them up. Here —" she gave him her programme.

Humphry had been observing; he saw that there had been a quarrel and a reconciliation. He was pleased; these two persons in his comedy were doing their parts. They would marry each other some day, without a doubt, and every one would like it, and they would like it themselves. His thoughts turned to Dick. A country dance was in progress, for the Squire always insisted on the introduction of

a few of these old-fashioned measures. Humphry noticed that whenever Margaret met Dick and had to give him her hand in the stately progression of the dance, she gave him also her brightest smile, and that Dick was ready in response. What spectre of the mind could live in the sunshine of that smile? Dick was undoubtedly a troublesome and provoking actor; the sweetest girl in England was here for his winning, and a whole happy life possible for him, and he was restless, doing nothing worth doing, prating about the heroic and so forth. He believed there must be some hidden cause; perhaps it was connected with the mysterious woman whom he had called the marplot. Some amazing information on the perplexing theme was about to be furnished to him.

Tom was going away next day. A remark made by Dick during the evening, which implied that they would never meet again, had filled him with apprehension. Dick in his absence might break through the conditions on which his life depended. Tom remembered that he was pledged to secrecy about the duel, but the burden of the secret was more than he could stand. He suddenly made up his mind to give some warning to Humphry.

"Come into the library for five minutes," he said shortly before supper. "I have something particular to say."

"Hullo," thought Humphry, "we're going to propose. This is very proper; the honourable young man approaches the lady's guardian before declaring his passion. Good."

When they were alone Tom began uncomfortably, "Look here, Humphry, Dick's in a mess. It's a secret, and I mustn't tell, but I'm going away, and I want you to keep an eye on him."

Humphry laughed heartily. "I keep an eye on all of you, Tom."

"It's no joke, I assure you; his life depends on it. I tell you it's serious. You must see that he doesn't go to Ireland again, and that he doesn't see Miss Chillington. I can't say any more, but if he does go over again, or sees her, it will cost him his life."

"What!" cried Humphry, "has he been espousing the cause of Ireland? Is he connected with dynamite, treason, the O'Beamish?"

Tom found himself compelled to tell Humphry the whole story. When he left him to fulfil his engagements in the ballroom Humphry remained alone in a state of utter amazement. Presently he lighted a cigar, and went out through the library on to the terrace.

"Well," he said to himself, "I set myself to contemplate a comedy, and behold I am let in for melodrama." He began walking up and down, and endeavoured to regard the situation seriously. Its comical aspect was uppermost in his mind, but he dismissed it. From what Tom had said, and from his knowledge of Dick's impetuous nature, he saw that it would be necessary for some prompt measure to be taken to prevent the possibility of disaster. Some counter excitement was necessary; he must

not be allowed to remain inactive; he must, above all, be removed from the chance of seeing Miss Chillington. He made a plan, and returned to the house anxious for further speech with Tom. He found him at the porch saying good-bye to some people who were leaving early.

"You must make Dick go to the Soudan with you," he said.

"By Jove, I wish I could," said Tom, "but how?"

"He must go as a war correspondent. Since we last met half an hour ago, Tom, I have started a newspaper for this purpose, *The Farinder Weekly Post*. You have friends at the War Office. You must get him permission to join the expedition. It is the only thing for him. He'll work off his fever, he'll be away from the influence of this wild Irish girl. He'll come back glad of the chance of enjoying life."

"You're a brick, Humphry," replied Tom, delighted. "You're just the man to help one in a mess. The excitement will be just the thing for him. He'll be able as a correspondent to go up to the front at his own pace while I am moving slowly with the regiment. Here we are only ordered away now, a reinforcement, and we may be too late for the fighting. It's perfectly maddening to be here to-night not started. The time Gordon gave is nearly up. There's a reward offered to the regiment that gets first to Korti. And the Nile falling. It's a

fearful race. O Humphry, my dear fellow, what is the love of any woman in the world compared to work like this?"

"Not worth thinking of," assented Humphry.

"By the way," said Tom, "Mr. Wrixon wants Nan to be ready to go home at one o'clock. She wants to stay to the end, you know. I wish you'd work it. She wants the fun of walking home with you and Dick, and I thought of coming with you part of the way."

"I'll see what I can do," replied Humphry, grinning. "You go and tackle Dick. I must have some supper."

"Right you are," said Tom; "I believe he's with Margaret in the conservatory as jolly as a sandboy; they've been chumming all the evening. If only he'd fall in love with her now — and they used to be tremendous sweethearts when they were kids, — he'd never want to go near the other girl, and it would be all right."

"Oh, it will be all right," replied Humphry.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE DESERT.

ENGLAND, like the spread-bellied, middle-aged gentleman who has ceased to use his fists but finds himself at times called upon to cuff unruly small boys, is frequently to be seen puffing and panting in different parts of the globe, in castigation of delinquent little rebels. The mental joys and anxieties consequent on increased girth are exacting; nevertheless, on the occasions when the muscles also have to be given play, a survival of the old fighting instinct, and with it something like enthusiasm, is apparent.

About Christmas in the year 1884 the thoughts of our people were, in the intervals of commerce, turned with an approach to excitement, towards the town of Khartoum, and the little army which was toiling thither up the Nile. The posters of the evening papers on the muddy pavements of London were scanned eagerly by citizens going homeward; old soldiers made an extra call at the clubs to see the latest telegrams, and let off an additional curse at the Government and the War Office.

It was but a month or two previously that our

Guards had been cheered through the streets on their departure. The weakest kneed of city clerks had felt a sudden glow of the warlike at the sight, and during the rest of the day was aware that he had a soul above the making out of invoices. Even the democratic working man, who complained that these expeditions were a burden to the nation and especially to his own class, was not unmoved.

It was an exciting race, the issue full of doubt. The progress of the army up the Nile was slower than had been anticipated; the falling river and other unforeseen difficulties had had to be encountered. The first regiments had only arrived at Korti, a distance of four or five hundred miles by the great bend of the Nile from Khartoum, and the date until which the besieged city was first said to be safe had expired. The other regiments were still toiling among the cataracts, and among those which had been the last to start, and were farthest from the front, chafed that which possessed Tom Longfield.

In a letter, received from him at Farinder on Christmas Day, he bitterly complained of his bad luck, entering into judgment against the whole expedition, and prophesying disaster. Dick, he said, would be in the fun; he had gone off headlong to the front with a reliable Arab guide and good horses; he would be travelling miles while they went inches. He spoke of the splendid way in which the men worked, and gave some description of

the lonely desert, and the great river with its sand dunes and straw villages. The letter was read aloud after dinner at the Manor, the Priory folks being there also, and the health of the boys was thereafter given by Mr. Longfield and responded to by Mr. Wrixon in mutually complimentary speeches, moving to every one, in Mrs. Longfield's case even unto tears.

"We may still be proud of the old country, Wrixon," said Mr. Longfield, "and proud of our own boys, God bless 'em."

"We can feel, sir," replied Mr. Wrixon, "that they have gone to the rescue of the man who went to the rescue of the honour of his country."

Even while these loving hearts at home were occupied with thoughts of him, Dick was preparing for a desperate undertaking. He had reached Korti a short time previously. The Guards with their camels, and detachments of various regiments, had already arrived; the Black Watch and others were close at hand. A state of uncertainty existed in the camp; there was no definite news from Khartoum, but the latest message had said, "Come quickly."

To follow the course of the Nile round its great bend would take another five or six weeks, and rumours were circulating of a march across the desert, to be made by a column of picked men. It was a daring scheme, involving disconnection of the force with its base, and the facing of unknown

perils in the desert, possibly disaster, annihilation; but it was the fervent hope of every man in the force that this plan would be carried out, and that he would be amongst those chosen.

Dick was restless with excitement. Excitement had dispelled his gloom and brought out his old enthusiastic spirits. His ride to the front had been exhilarating, its speed and his disregard for the dangers of the road had given him a reputation for recklessness, and a good reception amongst the officers in the camp at Korti. He was beginning to fret at the waiting and uncertainty, and was fearful as to his own chance of being allowed to accompany the desert column, if the march were decided upon. As a pretext he had obtained an appointment of correspondent to an insignificant provincial newspaper, but in addition to this qualification, a special permission would be required from the commander-in-chief to enable him to go to Khartoum with the force. Every hour of uncertainty made him more restless. Things at Khartoum might be even then desperate; Gordon might not know how far the relief force had come; it might be important that the desert march should be made to save the city. Then a daring scheme entered his head — the scheme which no man could have formed who was not utterly careless as to whether he lived or died; nay, rather, it was the scheme of one who courted death. He resolved to attempt to reach Khartoum himself. The conception filled him with the same joy which he had felt on

that starry night on the moor, when the idea of heroic death had first come to him. And here it was no longer an idea but within reach. If he succeeded in getting to Khartoum and returned alive, the news he brought might be the means of saving the city; if he died in the attempt, no finer death could be possible for him.

He made inquiries among the Arab adherents of the camp, and obtained the services of a man, a native of Khartoum, who was eager himself to reach the city if possible, as he had left there his family and what little property he possessed; and now the chance of a companion and a large bribe readily induced him to join the enterprise. The horse which had borne Dick so well previously had had several days' rest since his arrival at the camp and was sound and reliable.

The news that he was about to start one night across the Bayuda desert for Metammeh — he did not mention his further project of reaching Khartoum — was received by his friends with incredulity. Then, when conviction was established and the idea became familiar, much chaff followed after the custom of young Englishmen when there is desperate work on hand. They would probably never see him again, but it is no unusual thing for Englishmen to risk their lives in search of adventure. No one attempted to dissuade him, every one wished him luck. His friends took care that he should dine well that evening, and liberal health drinking followed. Some

light-hearted young subalterns accompanied him to the edge of the camp, singing songs.

The atmosphere of comradeship and cheerfulness and good hope was pleasant to think of an hour or two later, when he was out in the lonely desert in the moonlight, and the camp and the brightness of its life was left behind.

The night air was cool and refreshing. They rode on rapidly for several hours. The silence was profound. In the moonlight the desert was visible for miles around them, a level waste dotted here and there with patches of scrub and mimosa. The stars were dim in the moonlight. In front, over the city which they sought, stood the Southern Cross, and low in the west the Great Bear's familiar form brought memories of the dear native land, the green island in the wintry seas. In this lonely ride across the desert, before its hardship and danger commenced, Dick communed with his heart. He summed up the days of his life, the hopes of long ago, the failures, and the love which did not fail, and he was content and could say, "It is well."

"You know what we have to face," he said to the Arab; "you are brave, you do not fear to die."

"I do not fear," he replied, "but you English officers are braver than are we. We are in love with death, but you are in love with life. We are true believers, and know when we die bravely we shall go to Heaven; but you are unbelievers, and you do not even believe in your own false Heaven,

and yet you fight bravely and do not fear to die. But we are in love with death."

"Yes, we are in love with life," said Dick. "But some men among us prefer honour to comfort, and will give their lives for their fellows or their country. Such are the men of our army which we have now left. Such a man, the greatest among such, is Gordon Pasha to whom we go; but others among us face death less nobly because shame would overtake them if they lived."

"Your people are strange," said the guide, "they live for one another, and in fear of one another; to win the love, or to avoid the laughter of your fellows, you will do the same thing. But Gordon Pasha is greater than his race. He heeds not the voice of any man nor minds their reproach, and he believes in his God, which is better than to disbelieve, even though his God is a false god. I am for peace. My tribe will not follow the Mahdi. Gordon Pasha has been good to them. God permits the unbeliever to do his work."

"And you have seen Gordon Pasha?"

"Ay, when he was with us in years past and brought peace among the tribes and wealth to the poor, and freedom to the slave. I have seen him in my own city, in Khartoum, where the streets are dark with the shade of green trees, and the cool wind blows up from the blue hills. He is different from your race, which holds revel and drinks wine and believes not in its own Heaven; but he takes

not wine and his faith is great in his God, and he puts not his trust in woman."

Towards morning they reached some wells at the borders of a tract of grass country, and halted to rest the horses and take a couple of hours' sleep. They were undisturbed by any sight or sound of the foe. Before the moon set, they had discerned, dim in the distant plain, two camels journeying southward, but when morning dawned there was no sign of them. Next day they rode until noon when the sun became overpowering and drove them to the shelter of some trees for rest until after sunset. They rode through the night. At dawn they saw a troop of Arab horsemen travelling in the same direction as their own, and a change of plan followed: instead of making for the Nile at Metammeh, they now kept more to the westward in the direction of the Bayuda wells, with the object of approaching Khartoum from the desert, rather than along the Nile where the Mahdi's forces were likely to be gathering to oppose our troops. The travelling would be more arduous by the latter course, and it would give them no opportunity of replenishing their store of provisions; but on the whole the chances of the desert seemed better than those of the river. They had food for eight days, water they would have to seek on the way. The Arab calculated that Khartoum might be reached in seven days' steady riding; he had little apprehension about the desert journey, but he looked forward with constant anxiety to their position on

reaching the neighbourhood of the city. It was known that the Mahdi's troops swarmed about it: to get through appeared an impossibility. His only hope was that they might conceal themselves, and wait until a sortie was made and then join the returning force. He said frankly, that if they were taken he should join the ranks of the Mahdi.

Travelling became slower and more wearisome each day. The horses began to feel the strain; the distances between places of shelter and water grew longer. The loneliness of the desert, both by day and night, became oppressive; the sense of isolation from the world was complete. Dick grew impatient and constantly questioned his guide as to the distance yet to be travelled, but the Arab remained undisturbed.

On the fourth night after their start they came among some low hills covered with savas grass and scrub, — a pleasant change after the plain. They found abundant water here and determined on a long halt. The Arab was satisfied that they had now completed half their journey.

During the night they were disturbed by intermittent sounds of the beating of tomtoms. They concluded that one of the desert tribes on the way to join the Mahdi was camping for the night near them. To avoid discovery they set off on their journey again as soon as the moon had set, and next morning found themselves once more on the open plain.

In the distance, coming towards them, was a man

on foot; he was walking painfully and showed signs of great fatigue.

"He is not one of my race," said the Arab, contemptuously, as he approached; "he is a cowardly Egyptian. He is dying of thirst. He brings news."

When the Egyptian had drunk from the Arab's water-skin he told his tidings. He was one of the garrison of Omdurman. Omdurman had fallen three days before and he had escaped. Since its surrender the condition of Khartoum had become desperate. If the city were to be saved, the English must come at once.

The man's report was evidently true. Dick saw but one course open: to return to Korti at the utmost speed with the information. He gave the poor Egyptian his water-skin, and after the Arab had made clear some directions about the route, they left him.

Then the ride became exciting; the stimulation of a race was in it; the fate of the city might depend on their speed.

"Oh that our horses were fresh, fresh as when we started," cried Dick. "We could ride night and day without a check. But what if the horses fail us?"

"There is good work in them yet," said the guide; "they are good horses and will go bravely till they die."

He gave them the whole of the water in his own water-skin, relying on reaching springs where he could replenish it a few hours later. Then they

rode on again in silence, and Dick blessed his comrade in his heart for what he had done.

Before noon they reached the wells near the hilly ground where they had camped on the previous night. A group of acacia trees shaded the springs.

"Let us rest here until sunset," said the Arab, "and refresh our horses, then we will ride again until the dawn."

Dick slept profoundly. The sun had set when his companion called him. His sensations, on awaking suddenly and looking out across the desert over which twilight was spreading, were strange. For a moment he could not understand where he was. Then he aroused himself and laughed. He was refreshed by his long sleep, the evening air of the desert was exhilarating, he was excited by the thought of the work on hand. The mystery of the dim waste region and the deepening skies, the danger and doubt, the thought of the beleaguered city behind him, surrounded by the wild tribes of the desert, of the ride before him and all that might depend upon it, — all his surroundings thrilled him with the romance which he had grown to think unrealisable.

They rode that night harder than they had ridden at any time since they started. Towards morning the Arab's horse began to go lame; at daybreak he could hardly walk. They reached the shelter of some palm-trees with difficulty and remained there gloomily for some hours. The wells at which they

had hoped to rest during the hot hours were still out of sight, and there was no water here. As the horses were suffering badly, they determined to push on slowly, leading the crippled horse; his feet were sound and his lameness came from exhaustion. After working bravely for a couple of hours in the blazing sun, and when the palms about the wells were just visible on the horizon, the poor beast fell down, and died almost immediately. Dick looked at his guide in dismay, and even the imperturbable Arab was not unmoved.

"You must go on, my friend," said Dick; "there must be no delay about the tidings. You must take my horse."

"I can find my way to safety in the desert — the desert is my home," said the Arab. "You would perish, you must ride on."

"I know not the way, I should not find the camp if I rode," he answered; "and if our message is not delivered the city is doomed. You must go forward. I will take my chance, and you may come back with help to me."

"It must not be," said the Arab. "Let us go forward together slowly and ride by turns."

"And the city will be lost. I tell you, my friend, I care not for my life, it is of no account, but I care that the message be delivered swiftly. You are but three days' ride from Korti. My horse is sound. Tell me fully of the way and the distance between the wells and the direction which I must

take. I am strong, and I doubt not I shall reach the river."

They went together as far as the wells, where the Arab remained for some hours. Dick gave him a note for Tom Longfield which briefly told what had happened. His good comrade embraced him with emotion and they parted. Dick watched him until he was out of sight, then fatigue overcame him and he fell asleep.

For two days and two nights, resting at intervals when an opportunity of shade was afforded, he travelled across the desert without meeting a human being. The stars were his only guide. Now that his companion had left him, the loneliness of the journey through the silent nights was supreme; but the mystery and romance of his surroundings had almost ceased to appeal to him; hardship and suffering were beginning to tell; the physical wants were eloquent. He had rushed into danger and sought for death, and now that death was near — slowly advancing on him — he doggedly prepared to struggle against it and make a fight for life. The ideals and dreams of the past, almost love itself, dwindled to insignificance in that physical struggle. He had done nobly for once in his life, he had achieved the heroic, but no pleasant reflections about this rewarded him. In his fancies he bathed in flowing streams, drank deep, or lay in a hammock swinging in the branches of a tree above an English meadow. He began to crave for the sight of a human being, for an

enemy rather than no one, so appalling were the long hours of the silence of the desert.

On the third day after the departure of the guide he came upon the track of camels and horses. A dead camel lay on the sand; and he found a bag of dates, a rifle, and other things, which he concluded had been dropped hastily in flight, scattered about at intervals on the ground. The dates were a godsend, as he had nearly come to the end of his food. A little water still remained in the skin which the Arab had left with him. A dark object on the sand a few hundred yards distant attracted him, and on coming near he found it was the body of an Arab boy of six or seven years old. The child at first appeared to be dead, but on Dick's approach he rose on one elbow; in his right hand he held a short dagger which he raised defiantly; his large dark eyes gleamed with a fire of hatred. For some minutes Dick stood looking at him in wonder. It was a strange picture — the worn-out man contemplating with kind pitying eyes the Arab child who was too weak to rise, but defied him to approach; and round these two the wide waste of leagues of desert.

"Poor little beggar," said Dick. Then he tried to make himself understood in Arabic, a few words of which he knew. He said: "I am your good friend, my child."

The boy still looked defiant; but a minute after he sank to the ground again, exhausted. Dick put an arm beneath his head and gave him some water

and a little brandy. He discovered that he was injured in the thigh, and bound up the wound, which was still bleeding, with his handkerchief. It was the middle of the afternoon, the sun was powerful, there was no shelter at hand; but a group of palm-trees was visible a few miles distant. Towards these he walked with the boy in his arms. His burden instead of making his progress more difficult made it easier; the comradeship of a human creature gave him new life. To ease the suffering of the child, if possible to save his life, became for the time his sole thought. In spite of his own fatigue and thirst, he would not drink a single drop of the water which remained in the skin. Happily when the trees were reached water was found also. He bathed the boy's face, and washed his wound, and laid him down in the shade, hoping that he might sleep; then he drank some water and ate some dates and lighted his pipe. He sat with his back against a palm-tree watching the friendly smoke curl up from his pipe. Now and then he glanced over towards the boy. The little creature was wide awake, his large brilliant eyes were fixed on Dick; they had a strange beautiful expression, all the antagonism was gone.

Before long Dick fell asleep himself and did not wake until midnight. He determined to go on and travel as far as possible before the hot hours of the next day. The child drank some water, but would eat nothing; he made no opposition when Dick took

him in his arms, and a few minutes after starting he fell asleep. For some hours, stopping now and then for a short rest, he walked on. At dawn the boy awoke and spoke some unintelligible words; his face showed that he was suffering pain; still he would eat nothing, but drank a little water.

"My poor little chum," said Dick, with a kind smile, "we are both of us down on our luck. I am afraid we shall soon come to the end of our travelling."

The boy seemed to know he was saying something affectionate; he put his arm round his friend's neck and smiled for the first time since they had met. So a bond of brotherhood was established between these two.

Dick toiled on with steps gradually growing feebler, until the sun was high. On ahead he could see a line of wooded hills; but the intervening miles of desert were bare and treeless. He looked at the distant hills and at his little friend gloomily. His strength was almost exhausted, but he pulled himself together and went bravely on. After a while the child's mind began to wander and a change came into his face. Dick feared the movement of walking might cause him suffering; he laid him on the sand and rested his head against his arm, stretching his coat above him to shelter him from the sun. Thus he lay until he died an hour or two later. Dick kissed his poor little comrade, and made a grave for him in the sand and went on again. His own

strength was almost gone, he believed his end was near; but the thought produced no emotion — his sensations were numbed. Still he went doggedly on, and at last reached the shelter of the hills. As he lay down he heard the sound of a distant gunshot, but he was too fatigued to be aroused by it and fell asleep immediately. He slept for three or four hours and awoke somewhat refreshed when it was growing dusk. He could hear the beating of Arab war-drums, and the frequent sound of gunshots, which told of the presence of the enemy in numbers, and raised the hope that the English force was near. While he was considering what course it would be best to pursue he saw three Hussars gallop past, and at the same time several shots rang from the riflemen of the enemy concealed in the scrub and long grass. The Hussars turned out to be the advance vedettes of Colonel Stewart's relief force, which was being withdrawn to the zerebah where the column was camped for the night.

Dick was so much excited by what he had seen, which told him that the relief column was near, and that his guide's message must have been delivered, that he raised a great shout as the Hussars swept by. Then he determined to follow the direction they had taken in the hope of finding the English camp before dark. It was a choice of dangers between doing this and remaining concealed during the night with the enemy all around him. The camp was closer than he had expected; a turn in his path at the base

of the hill showed him the zerebah not a quarter of a mile distant on the open plain.

The wisest course for him to have taken would have been to have concealed himself after marking the position of the zerebah, and waited until darkness came before attempting to reach it. But he was excited and impatient; his own safety was a thing he now hardly considered, and without hesitation he walked straight towards the zerebah. He was soon observed both by the enemy and the English camp; he became a mark for some of the Arab riflemen; bullets hummed past him and several struck the sand unpleasantly near; but he walked on as steadily as if he had been on a turnpike road. He was conscious of wishing to cut a good figure; if he were killed, this is what he had come here for, and he would be killed in a dignified manner and not when running away from the enemy. He felt a positive satisfaction as the bullets sighed past that he was in view of English friends, and that if he were lost the news of how he fell would be reported at home and Elsinora would hear of it. But he came to the zerebah untouched, assuming an air of indifference as he strolled up.

"By gad! I never saw a man behave better under fire," said one officer of many campaigns to another who had been watching him approach. "Who the devil can he be?"

"Oh, one of the correspondents, I expect," replied the other. "They are always trying to show us that a civilian can stand fire as well as a soldier."

When Dick got into the zerebah and was recognised, he was at once surrounded by friends; his assumed stoicism almost broke down in the joy of the meeting, but he managed to keep up appearances, said he had had a damn bad time since he saw them last, and so forth. His Arab guide, it appeared, had safely arrived with his message, having met the column on the second day after it had started; the staunch fellow had since started again with two horses to seek him in the direction he thought it was most likely he might be found; his heart glowed when he heard it. In a few weeks of danger he had seen everywhere the nobility of human nature, which he had failed to find in the world of civilisation and progress. For here were men who a few years ago had been loafers in the slums of cities now doing heroes' work; and others whose aim of life had formerly seemed to be only their own pleasure, and the bond of fellowship between them as flimsy as the common follies which brought them together, now ready to sacrifice their lives without a complaint, and bound together by the ties of true comradeship.

After reporting himself to the general, who had expressed a wish to hear his account of the meeting with the Egyptian soldier, Dick was entertained at supper by some of his former acquaintances. Food and a bottle of champagne revived his strength and spirits. Every one in the camp seemed gay; the real business of the campaign had begun, and there was every possibility of a fight next day.

During the whole evening the firing from the hill-side and the bushes continued — most of the shots happily flying over the zerebah, but some finding their mark. There were several cases in the hospital, and two or three men had been killed. Lights were not allowed in the camp, and there was no moonlight, but in the clear starlight the sides of the hills of Abuklea were discernible; and within the zerebah the shadowy lines of the men lying on the ground muffled in their blankets, the officers and sergeants moving quietly about, the gaunt forms of the camels showed dark against the lighter background of the desert sands and the sky.

When Dick lay down, muffled in the friendly shelter of an ulster, he was unable to sleep. He first began revolving in his mind all that he had been through during the last week; then his thoughts travelled homewards, and he pictured himself returning to Farinder and seeing them all assembled round the fire in the old dining-room; and then he remembered that he was not to return, and he was troubled, and his thoughts were all of Elsinora, and his memory of their last parting, and the courage and honour and loveliness of his lady. He was disturbed in his meditation by the talking of three officers who were lying near him, and who were also unable to sleep, — indeed the continued firing and the sound of the tomtoms of the Arabs in all directions around them, made sleep a difficult thing for any one. They were speaking of one of their number who had been

killed in a skirmish that afternoon — a young officer of promise and a great favourite.

"How keen he was to come out," one of them was saying; "he exchanged you know from the —th with Gibson, who was glad enough to stay at home."

"Oh, yes, I know the whole story, poor old fellow; he was as plucky as you find them; but, as he said to me once, 'when there's a woman in the question the only thing you can do is to run.'"

"I suppose there was something in the gossip about him and Gibson's wife."

"Yes, rather; every one knew it. Gibson is not the sort of man to inspire enthusiasm in a woman, I should think. Anyhow, poor old Caruthers did the plucky thing, and got out of the way, and she has her husband safe, and Frank is dead."

"Hard lines," said the third.

Dick started up. "Caruthers," he cried. "Did you say Frank Caruthers?"

"Yes. Did you know him?"

"Yes. I was at school with him."

No more was said. It was nothing unusual, but Dick's heart was touched. He was his first hero, — the boy who had got him into disgrace, for whose dishonesty and for love of whom he had accepted humiliation. And after all he had not been mistaken in his hero; it was not a misfortune to die such a death; the story gladdened his heart.

And next day, without doubt, there was to be fighting; the wells of Abuklea would not be passed

without a battle. This also brought him a strange content as he lay between sleeping and waking. He would fight to-morrow as a man who is in love with death; and if he died, it would be in the service of his country. And now until the rising of Venus, the signal with the Arabs for beginning a battle, he might sleep. He was weary; he had run into every kind of danger which had offered itself; he had courted death like a lover, and death, notwithstanding, had been denied to him.

## CHAPTER IV.

### CONNIE DISCOVERS A CONSCIENCE.

THE campaign in the Soudan with its tragedies and disappointments was over. The disgrace of the winter was forgotten; indeed our greatness, Imperial and Colonial, was being demonstrated to us in an exhibition at South Kensington.

It was a Saturday evening in July. London was enjoying the fulness of her season in familiar ways; her chosen children were on view in the park, and a few of her despised children were among the spectators. Mr. Chillington and Elsinora were to be seen with the former, Robert Strong and Connie with the latter. Strong usually found the scene a stimulating text for denunciation, but this afternoon his Socialism had an unwonted mellowness. He was better dressed than usual, and looked a fine specimen of the stalwart British mechanic.

"That's how these working men do it nowadays," said a languid young gentleman to a friend as they passed; "they dress their women up like ladies. And by Jove, I say, isn't she a beauty?"

Connie oveheard the last remark, and could not resist rewarding the speaker with a smile.

She was very gaily dressed, but her appearance was somewhat changed. She had lost her abundant black locks, though her hat concealed the fact that her hair was cropped short all over her head. She had recently suffered a term of two months' imprisonment for stealing a bracelet from a sister actress.

As far as it was in a man's power to win her, Strong had succeeded. His faithfulness to her through everything had at last touched her heart. After her conviction, Eustace, who was previously almost ready to offer her marriage, had disappeared, disgusted with her, ashamed of himself. He and Strong had met outside the court after the case was over. Strong, with a heart full of pent-up misery and indignation, had smiled grimly when he had seen him, and fired a parting shot at him. "I suppose you don't find it pleasant to think you were making your puny love to a thief," he said; "but, whatever she is, you and the like of you are not fit to black her boots."

It had probably been jealousy rather than covetousness which had prompted her to steal the bracelet. She stated that she had intended to restore it, but nobody believed this. She felt the disgrace of her position keenly. She knew she would be shunned by those who had called themselves her friends, when she came out of prison. She felt as much humiliation as her nature permitted. Her prospects on the stage were destroyed; she had no home; her pride forbade her either to ask Dick for money or go to

Strong, whom she had previously neglected; the most degraded career possible to a woman was her outlook. But at the gate of Pentonville prison on the morning of her release she was met by Strong. He had been waiting for hours; he treated her with as much chivalrous attention as though she had been a noble lady in distress. When they were alone together she had broken down completely for the first time in her life; whatever she had said then of affection and repentance had been genuine.

Strong had been promoted by his employers, and had just accepted an offer made by them to act as manager to a branch factory which they were establishing in New South Wales. Connie had readily agreed to accompany him. The generous side of her nature had really been aroused, and she was anxious to try what she could to undo any wrong she had done not only to Strong but to Dick. She was anxious to communicate with Dick, and to let him know that he need never fear her troubling him again, but she could find no tidings of his whereabouts.

With eyes on the look-out for attractive carriages or riders, Connie presently perceived Elsinora and her father.

"My aunt!" she exclaimed, "the Irish princess!" as they drew up their horses close to where she was sitting, and entered into conversation with a friend.

She was alert to hear what was said, and gathered that Mr. Chillington and his daughter had just returned from abroad, and were in London for a few

days. The hotel was mentioned, and an invitation to dinner given. Elsinora looked radiant; there was laughter at something she said as they rode away. Connie indicated her to Strong with excitement.

"This is the chance I've wanted," she said, "and I'll call to-night. I had my fun with her, but I'll let her know how things are. I made her believe we were really properly married. My! I wonder how she'll take it. If she cares for him really, there's no knowing what she'll do. She seems jolly enough, laughing there; perhaps she don't trouble about him."

"He troubles about her, that's enough," replied Strong, looking after Elsinora; "and here's a chance for a woman to prove her love which one in a thousand don't get. They talk and talk about being ready to die for a man, but they won't risk displeasing society for him."

"I'm not sure about her," Connie mused.

"If she really loves him, Connie, do you think she'd make your going to a registry office with him a bar? No, she'd be proud of the chance of defying this rotten conventionality for his sake. She'd be proud she had no legal hold on him. And that's our case. You're not afraid I'll chuck you because we're not married?"

"Chuck me!" cried Connie, with a show of indignation. "Better mind as I don't chuck you," but she touched his hand with hers as she spoke. "Come along; let's be on the move. I've settled to

go and see the Irish princess to-night after she's got her dinner."

Mr. Chillington was satisfied that there was little fear of his daughter marrying O'Connor. She had told him of the engagement, and he had known her nature too well to oppose it directly. His plan was to divert her attention; he devoted himself to her amusement. He had the entrance to society of distinction, and she became his constant companion. She made him additionally welcome; she was admired as much as he could wish, did him infinite credit, and seemed personally gratified. He foretold that from this circle a man of mark should stand forth and transplant the flower from the Irish potato garden to a garden befitting it.

There was certainly nothing in her manner to indicate a troubled mind. At dinner that evening she was full of gay spirits. Their party included Sir Compton and Lady Dando and their niece Miss Mansfield of Newnham College, Norton Tristram, and a Mr. Sinclair, a gentleman of political promise. Letters had been received from Egypt in the afternoon; one from Nevil Chillington spoke of an immediate return to England; one from Blaise Dando made allusion to Dick. Elsinora had heard it read before dinner with a beating heart.

"You remember," he said, "a fellow called Malory, Longfield's friend, the man who once spent a night at Somerford, who came on a donkey — he was out here playing the lunatic. They say he tried to get

to Khartoum by himself — on a horse this time, not a donkey. Afterwards he fell in with the flying squadron, and nearly got killed at Abuklea. I don't see the force of correspondents and nondescripts being allowed to mix themselves up as they do more and more every war with the forces. It ought to be stopped; it's not fair to the soldiers for these outsiders to go in front of them and take the pick of the fun. But they all say Malory was a good fellow, and frantically reckless. As soon as he was out of hospital, he was up to his larks again; he went into the river after a private who got capsized in one of the boats in the rapids, and though he ought to have been drowned, he got ashore, and landed his man too. I believe he's gone home now."

The letters were alluded to at dinner.

"Your boy's letters seem to have been like mine," said Mr. Chillington, "full of disappointment about the campaign. Such grumbling I never heard."

"Just the same," replied Sir Compton; "these youngsters are hard to satisfy; they know too much; they criticise their generals and the Government and every one."

"We make too much of young men," said Mr. Chillington; "they won't listen to us, but we listen to them. We take far more interest in our sons than our sons take in their fathers."

"Well, I think that very natural," said Lady Dando.

Mr. Sinclair laughed. "And I suppose the race

takes more interest in its descendants than in its ancestors."

"Oh, I don't agree with you," said Elsinora. "Do tell me, now, how you can take any interest in your descendants. You do not know anything about them — they are shadows. But your ancestors are real people; you see their portraits, and the houses they built, and their tombs, and you hear tales about them, and you know them."

"Ah, Miss Chillington," said Tristram, "that is family pride. If your ancestors had been shopkeepers instead of these terrible 'kings of Connaught and viceroys of Tralee,' you might not find them so attractive."

"I suppose it is a matter of race and temperament," said the politician. "The Orientals seem to take more interest in their ancestors, the English in their descendants. The Chinese spend their pocket-money in decorating the tombs of their forefathers, the Englishman lays his up for his children. He desires to found a house. Take Sir Walter Scott; he loved the past, but his greatest desire was to found a family." He spoke precisely with the air of settling the matter finally.

"But tell me, Mr. Tristram," Elsinora persisted, "how can you take any interest in your descendants whom you don't know?"

"Imagine them, Miss Chillington."

"The difference," said Miss Mansfield, "seems to me like that between your interest in the road you

have left behind you, and the unknown road in front of you."

"I am a *cul-de-sac*," observed Tristram.

Lady Dando laughed, and shook her head reprovingly.

"Our conduct," said Mr. Chillington, "will bear fruit in our descendants, but does not touch our forefathers."

"Now you have hit the mark," said Sir Compton. "Our parents try to shape us, and we try to shape our youngsters; we prefer thrashing to being thrashed, eh, Chillington, what?"

"But my husband is the kindest of parents," Lady Dando hastened to state; "and I am thankful to say our boys have not given us a moment's anxiety."

"I hope the mischief will not show itself later on," said Elsinora, with a sly look at her father; "steady boys, I have been told, are so apt to break out when they are fifty."

"Oh, what a horrible thought, Elsinora. Now do tell me you are joking; that is the way with you Irish girls, we never know when you are serious."

Tristram laughed gaily; Mr. Sinclair smiled serenely; Sir Compton hastily assured his friends that their boys were considerably worse than their mother knew.

"Compton!". said Lady Dando.

"Nothing serious, of course — no harm in them, you know," he said, apologetically.

"I should like my cousin Blaise to hear this conversation, immensely," said Miss Mansfield.

"Dear Blaise!" sighed Lady Dando, reassured. "Well, I suppose there are some things we need not inquire into. The world is different for men and women; the books, for instance, which our boys may read, would not always do for our girls. Sir Compton is very particular, Mr. Chillington; he likes me to cut his books for him, and he always insists on my cutting the French novels upside down."

"My dear Lady Dando," said Tristram, "your husband pays you a great compliment; he shows at once his faith in your liberal judgment, which allows you to permit to him an indulgence which you deny yourself; and it also shows that he considers you free from curiosity, and is confident that you would not practise the art of reading upside down."

Sir Compton laughed rather uncomfortably; conversation followed on recent literature.

"And when is your great national poet going to appear, Miss Chillington?" asked Miss Mansfield; "you want one to express your wrongs."

"I am afraid he would not find a publisher," she replied, and turning to Tristram, "I once asked an English poet to remedy our deficiency, and come over and see the sorrow of the land, and make a poem for us, and he promised — and he did not fulfil his promise."

"Ah, Miss Chillington!"

"Seriously! Mr. Tristram."

"Well, I will come still, if you will let me; but mind, I cannot tell which cause the poems will side

with; and supposing it were hostile, should I get shot for it?"

"Well, you must be prepared. Have your deathbed saying ready; all poets have a deathbed saying. Now tell me, have you some beautiful last word ready, Mr. Tristram?"

Every one laughed at Tristram.

"Irish poetry may not reach the high-water mark from our point of view, Tristram," said Mr. Chillington; "but I think it succeeds in expressing the national sentiment and wrongs very fairly. There was in my youth an old beggar who used to stand on Carlisle Bridge in Dublin, and beg in song. He used to say:

A bit of duck or cold goose-pie,
Something to dhrink for in troth I'm dhry;
An empty sack can't stand agin a wall,
And the devil a bit I had this day at all.

Old Zozemus, as he was called, seems to me as the voice of Ireland itself. You will notice the condition of the appetite, and the modesty of the request."

"A witty people, a witty people," remarked Sir Compton.

"And they are simply tremendous in their war songs," continued Mr. Chillington.

Oh! the French are on the sea,
Says the Shan-van-vogh;
Oh! the French are on the sea,
They'll be here without delay,
And the Orange shall decay,
Says the Shan-van-vogh.

"The poet, you see, is thoroughly Irish in his rhymes as well as his sentiments, and demands that the word 'sea' shall be pronounced 'say'; and then that charming lyric, 'Pat Molloy,' how much it teaches us!

> Me pockets they are empty, but me heart is full of joy,
> For old Ireland is me counthry, and me name is Pat Molloy.

What possible greater happiness could fall to the lot of man? Even empty pockets cannot damp his jubilation when he remembers his nationality."

Elsinora laughed; she was well accustomed to her father's banter about Ireland.

"Yes," she said, "an Englishman could never have been proud of his country with empty pockets; he loves his country apparently because it has filled them."

After dinner Elsinora received a note from Connie to say she must see her, and would come at nine o'clock. She made an excuse for not accompanying her party to the theatre, and awaited her visitor impatiently. Connie arrived punctually, and was met by Elsinora in hat and cloak in the porch of the hotel.

"I received your note. We cannot talk here," she said. "Come down this way; we can walk along the embankment."

She was trembling. She was no longer the lady whose real feelings were hidden beneath brave spirits and gay manner. Connie was quite at ease.

"You and me'd better be friends," she said, "it's for the interest of all concerned. I wasn't quite straight with you when we met before, but I suppose I'm a bad lot. You see I wasn't brought up like you, with a pa a churchwarden, and that."

"You've some news? Something important to tell me?" Elsinora asked.

"P'r'aps you'll think it's important, "p'r'aps not, I don't know. Well, do you know, I'm a reformed character. I'm almost respectable. I say, how you walk? We've been taught to hold ourselves and posture and all, but it's natural to you. I never saw any one walk so easy."

"I remember you are on the stage," said Elsinora, absently.

"I have given up my profession," said Connie, "I am going abroad. I saw you among the toffs in the park this afternoon. I was there too with my husband."

Elsinora thought she meant Dick. She was unable to speak. Connie heard her catch her breath. She enjoyed the situation.

"Don't be upset," she said, "I didn't mean Dick, though he's my husband on paper. I meant Mr. Strong, you've heard of him. We're off to Australia together next month. I never told a soul but yourself about that registry office business, and I never will. I'm to be Mrs. Robert Strong, 'the wife of our respected fellow-citizen' out there."

"Does he — does Mr. Malory know anything about this?" asked Elsinora, eagerly.

"No, that's one thing I wanted to see you about. Do you know if he is coming home? or where he is?"

"I heard he was on his way home, but I don't know."

"Then you and him don't write. I wish you did for his sake. But you're respectable and he's a paper husband. So of course we must be discreet, eh?"

Elsinora endured her familiarity without comment.

"Well, I've come to-night as your friend and his," continued Connie. "I'm fond of him and always was and always will be, and I've done him no good and I'd like to make it up if I could. He was kind to me from the first, the very first time we met when I bolted from the circus, and afterwards we saw you — that was the first time he saw you too — and then he married me because he wanted to reform me." She laughed, but suddenly asked, "Did he tell you anything about it?"

"Yes," replied Elsinora, "he told me everything."

"About our going away together and Strong coming down and all?"

"Yes."

Connie was disappointed, she wished to have communicated this herself.

"And in spite of all that," said Connie contemptuously, "you let him go. Oh it's fine to be respectable. *I* know, 'What will people say?' 'What will papa say?' Now don't be angry, it's only my way. I see by your look you don't think me worth getting angry with."

"Say what you like," replied Elsinora. "I am not angry. It was good of you to come to me. I am glad to hear about you and Mr. Strong. I know he is a man a girl may be proud to love."

"He never did a mean thing in his life," said Connie seriously. "The things I've done are the things he hates most, and still he loves me. There were plenty of them admired me, I tell you, but I believe he admired me more than any one."

"When a brave man really loves you he is worth doing anything in the whole world for," said Elsinora; "and Mr. Strong is not like the others you spoke of: he doesn't love you for your face, he would love you if you were —"

"Don't you believe it," interrupted Connie, "and I wouldn't like him to either. Looks means a deal with men, whoever they are. You know it yourself, I'm positive, with looks like yours."

Elsinora could not help laughing.

"I'm speaking very free to you," Connie remarked, "but you see the circumstances are peculiar. It's not for me to make suggestions, but in case there's anything between you and Dick, don't you fear any trouble from me."

"It is not that. I know you are really generous and good," cried Elsinora; "but nothing can make any difference — now."

"Then," said Connie, "that tale Bob got, I think he told him himself, that you was going to marry some one else, is true?"

"No, no, it is not true. I am not going to marry anybody. Don't ask me questions. Let us go back, you have been kind to come."

They were standing on the embankment looking out on the dark river.

"Look here!" said Connie, "this is my wedding ring." She took it out of her purse and held it up. "I threw it away once and I found it again. Now watch!" and she tossed it over the parapet into the water.

## CHAPTER V.

### LOVE AND LIFE.

DICK'S fever had burned itself out: calm replaced his unrest. His first passionate despair at the loss of Elsinora had been subdued in recent scenes of counter excitement, and the strong love of life, inseparable from a vigorous nature, remained. The thought of death, which when he had wooed it as a lover had filled him with exaltation, now that it had rejected him as such was horrible. And there was no necessity to die. He had courted death: now life was wooing him. In the hot Egyptian June the memory of England, of English meadows cooling the evening, of the voices of dear companions grew eloquent. Every day of his homeward voyage strengthened his hold on life. He was like the convalescent who after past fever rejoices to sit in the sun and feel the gentle growth of returning strength. The accumulated evils of years seemed to have withered away in the recent fire of thought and danger through which he had passed. The world was restored to him, recreated, made fresh as the earth which the thunderstorm has cleared. And as desire for life grew it began to press reason into its service. He

had striven to die for Elsinora, and at the same time for England: he had failed. How should he now find a way to serve either by death? And was not Humphry right when he said that a modern man who would serve his fellows must live for them, not die for them? Reason reminded him of his sister and others who loved him. And Elsinora? it was her emphatic wish that they should not meet. She saw in their separation the chance of perfecting the ideal of love which would be sullied by any attempt at realising it. If he went to her now and sought to dissuade her by every means in his power from marrying O'Connor he might fail, and his life would be forfeited. As an honourable man he could not think of such a course unless he was prepared to face the penalty of death. If she found that it was impossible to marry O'Connor his going to her would still be of no avail: he could not marry her. The whole business of the duel began to look ridiculous to him, as it had looked to Humphry. His love of life was stronger than his love of a woman.

But there were times, also, when he did not feel this — times when the thought of her beauty, the memory of her perfect love, the fancy of her arms about his neck, brought him torture in contemplation of her as O'Connor's wife. She might grow attached to O'Connor when he became her husband; or that grand ideal of love which she had cherished might also fail. One look from her, one touch of her hand, even a message of love from her, might easily

have overturned all his philosophy, and made him eager for death again if death were necessary to free her. But the influence of her presence was wanting, and the love of life was gradually and surely growing. When he arrived in England at the end of July, it was to life, not death, he looked forward. He made up his mind that, unless she was in need of him and sent for him, he would not go to her. He had no definite plans, but for the present he decided to go to Farinder, and sit in the sun and find rest after stormy seas.

With Elsinora it was otherwise. Well as she loved life, she loved Dick far more. The thought of him was an undercurrent of all her thoughts; her gaiety was on the surface; she was playing a part, and doing so helped her to bear her pain. When she was alone she was living over again every hour which they had spent together. She had given herself to him; no bonds of marriage could bind them closer than she felt herself bound. She had known that her soul was his when he had kissed her, and now to marry another man, to suffer his endearments, was impossible. To have done so would have been an unnatural outrage on herself, worse than suicide.

O'Connor had returned from an unsuccessful mission to America. He at once saw that there was a gulf deeper than ever between him and her. He behaved generously, and made the termination of the engagement far easier for Elsinora than she had anticipated. All his work had been in vain, his health broken, his hopes ruined; but he accepted his

fate like a man. His conduct touched her, wounded her, made her condemn herself. She longed to make some sacrifice in return, as much to satisfy her own sense of honour as to show her gratitude to O'Connor. This had been the reason for her silence to Dick, and this had decided her to go abroad with her father so that the chance of their meeting might be removed. She resolved that she would not even write to him to let him know that she was not to marry O'Connor. A word from her might bring him to her, and that must not be. But in spite of the relief which came to her in the freedom from her engagement, she could not be happy. She would have been miserable but for the strength of her love, and her firm faith that Dick loved her as constantly and deeply as she him. Every morning her first thought, every night her last was of him, and she doubted not that at the same time his were of her. She understood his silence; she had asked him to go away and not see her again, and he had obeyed her wish. He had faced death; he had showed that he loved her better than he loved his own life. This was her comfort, this made the future endurable, made life beautiful still though it could not be happy.

Thus did these two lovers find ease. One in the love of life: one in the ideal of love. And yet it needed but the clasp of hands to destroy their security, to threaten again the barriers. For neither of these could there be any permanent rest apart from the other.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE MARPLOT.

On the morning of the last Sunday in August an unusually large congregation converged on Farinder church. It was tacitly understood that there was to be a sort of thanksgiving service in celebration of the victory which had been achieved on the previous day in the great annual cricket match with Wayland. Wayland and Farinder were rivals in everything, but the cricket match was looked upon as the final test of strength, and Farinder, after three successive defeats, had won a famous battle. Mr. Middleton, the rector, was a cricket enthusiast. During the last half-hour of the game, when his son, the Farinder captain, and Tom Longfield were at the wickets together, and two runs a minute were needed for the win, his excitement had been amusing; and in the last over, when the suspense was ended, and Tom made the winning hit, he was overpowered. He found it necessary to be alone, and retired hastily behind the pavilion. He could not of course deliberately ask people to come to church to return thanks; but before leaving the field he had said, "I hope I shall see you to-morrow morning," in a context which marked his meaning.

Farinder understood and responded. The eleven, — all save one, — their relations and their admirers, which meant the whole parish, were on their way to the church. All save one of the eleven, for Wixey, the grocer's son, whose contribution to the success was a minus quantity, since he had not only failed to score, but had also neglected to catch a gentleman who afterwards made forty runs, — Wixey refused to leave his bed.

Professor Wintersea, now visiting at the Priory, was also walking towards the church with his friends, but he proposed to leave them at the porch and take a walk during service. His mind was occupied just then with a mathematical problem, — the construction of a formula which should enable a man to determine before marriage the probability against his becoming the father of twins; and the Sabbath peace of the fields was favourable for reflection.

"How pleased Middleton will be!" said Mr. Wrixon as they crossed the park, and could see from its slopes the unusual numbers making for the church. "When a clergyman identifies himself with the sports and pleasures of the people he can do wonders. By the way, Humphry, I have been telling Dick that the game of cricket is an unworked field for sculpture. He must try his hand on it."

"Capital," Humphry agreed. "I believe there's money in it. The Surrey Club keeps a poet to celebrate its heroes. Why shouldn't it keep a sculptor also? There would be an immense de-

mand for statues of Lohmann bowling, or Abel at short slip."

"Abel, bless my soul!" cried the Professor. "Ah, yes; of course. I was thinking for the moment of the book of Genesis."

"He's talking nonsense," said Mr. Wrixon. "I don't mean statues of individual players, but ideal representations. I specially noticed a man called 'point,'—the whole pose of the figure, alert, expectant of the ball, a wonderful subject! And the bowler just in the act of hurling the ball. And some one made a catch with one hand thrown back high behind his head, that would do still better."

"And somebody dropped a catch," said Nan, "and Miss Morscrop thought he had done something so clever. 'Oh,' she said to him, '*do* let me congratulate you, we *all* saw you. You almost caught somebody out?'"

Even the Professor could join in a laugh at this depth of ignorance.

"I hope you will think seriously of my suggestion, Dick," said Mr. Wrixon. "You must back me up, Wintersea. What did you think of his work?"

On the evening before, Humphry had shown the Professor a number of sketches which Dick had made formerly. They had caused him considerable embarrassment, as they were chiefly studies from the nude. He had turned them over very rapidly with the comment, "Ah, yes, the human figure, very necessary of course, quite indispensable, and no

doubt beautiful also." He was not at ease in the discussion of artistic themes; and now, after expressing his hearty approval of what he had seen, gave the subject a statistical turn.

"It may interest you to know," he said, addressing Dick, "that the profession you have adopted is favourable to longevity. The artist lives long, lawyers and clergymen are also high on the list, the publican and the butcher low down. The butcher dies young, Wrixon."

"And you think the cricketer a good subject?" asked the old man.

"Very promising, indeed. I hope you will embrace it, Wrixon. I was much fascinated by the contest, and the scene was very charming, — the sunshine, the happy village youths bounding across the green sward in pursuit of the ball, encouraged by the spectators, — a happy scene. I wish I were young enough myself to take part in such pursuits."

"Ah," observed Humphry, "you and I have got far beyond the cricket stage. There is a gradation of games, the seven ages of sport. Football and cricket to begin with, then lawn tennis, and, as age advances, golf and a tricycle, and finally archæological expeditions.

"You have forgotten amateur photography," said Dick.

"Quite right, Dick, that should come near the end. Why, here are all the Longfields. And look at Tom, isn't he splendid? Tall hat and frockcoat,

and Margaret looking brighter and prettier than ever in another new dress. Ah, if only I were twenty years younger."

"As if she'd ever have married you," said Nan.

"My dear Anna," said the Professor, "it can be demonstrated that the probability is largely in favour of a young lady accepting as her husband the first agreeable man who seriously woos her; and I assure you that, as a young man, your uncle was much sought after, and I see no reason why he should not marry still. As my esteemed friend, Professor Hex of Oxford, once remarked of another, your uncle's 'coefficient of matrimoniality' is considerable."

"Of course it is," said Dick, laughing. "After this we shall expect you to get married instantly, Humphry."

"Well, you all seem very merry," said Margaret as the two parties met.

"And what a gathering," cried the Squire, joyously. "Splendid weather for the harvest, Wrixon; and here's my friend, Nan, with the cricket colours flying in her hat, — these girls think of nothing but cricket, — and how are you, Professor Wintersea, not seen you, sir, since that night we all dined together in London two years ago."

"I remember, a most agreeable evening," answered the Professor. "I recall it distinctly. I wish our friends would come up to town oftener."

"I feel perfectly lost there now," said the Squire. "It's not the London I knew long ago. It's like

some great American place; it don't seem part of England. Look at the hotel we were at with the lift and the damned foreign waiters, and the white-faced, bald-headed young men who smoke cigarettes in the hall, and stare at you, confound 'em, as if you were a curiosity."

"But we liked the electric light, it is so cool compared with gas," said Mrs. Longfield.

"A very just remark," observed the Professor.

"And after all the lift was a great convenience."

"Yes," said the Professor; "it is interesting to observe how largely the discoveries of science have been utilised in the service of comfort."

"Comfort, fiddle-de-dee," said the Squire. "Give me candles for comfort. Candles were invented by Alfred the Great."

"Ah, indeed, King Alfred." The Professor received the remark with the same polite gravity which he would have given to it if it had been more profound and truer.

"Yes, of course, sir. I thought it was well known. He used 'em as clocks."

On the church pathway they fell in with other acquaintances. As Margaret Longfield and Dick, who were in front of the others, passed Lady Denham and Mrs. Clapton Crosby, these ladies exchanged the lifting of eyebrows.

"How well Margaret Longfield looks. I wonder if there is anything between her and that devil-may-care young Malory. I shouldn't wonder a bit, and

probably her parents don't like it. He is a rolling-stone, and not well off."

"I have heard that he is clever and might do well," said Lady Denham.

"I hardly know him. He's a fine young fellow. I like a tall man — at least — " she remembered that Mr. Clapton Crosby was short, "only if he has other attractions."

"Here comes his uncle."

The Professor had just detached himself, and was footing it rapidly across the fields. Humphry joined the ladies.

"Ah, Mr. Wrixon, how do you do? Quite a surprise to meet you here."

"Indeed, I was at church last Sunday. I find the new curate's intoning very soothing."

"I sometimes fear we think almost too much about accessories in religion," remarked Mrs. Crosby. "We ought not to be dependent on such things as a voice. But I confess myself that I find a musical service a great help."

"Mrs. Longfield gave us a delightful picnic yesterday," remarked Lady Denham. "It was quite a pleasant change to see cricket after so much tennis. We were dreadfully excited, Mr. Wrixon. I did so feel for the poor men when they had to come out."

"But I was so angry with that man who hit the ball right into poor Mrs. Longfield's tea-tent," said Mrs. Crosby. "It was so thoughtless of him. Did you happen to notice who it was?"

"Yes," replied Humphry, "his name is Green; he is under-gardener at the Manor-House. I am very much distressed; his thoughtlessness bodes ill for the future comfort of our housemaid."

"Oh, really! Is he *occupé* in that direction? are they engaged?"

"Not precisely. They — ah — coambulate."

"They *what?*"

"That is, 'walking together,'" explained Humphry. "In their station of life I understand 'walking together' to be a relationship preliminary to betrothal. It has some advantages."

The ladies went into church. Humphry lingered outside the porch until the others came up. He glanced at Dick and Margaret, who were also waiting in another part of the churchyard, and noticed with satisfaction that Dick seemed to have a good deal to say to her, and that her face was full of animation and happiness. Knots of village boys saluted him and passed into church with clattering feet, old village people paused a moment to exchange greetings with him, the jubilant peal of the tower, rung for the victory, was changed for the note of a single bell to warn in the loiterers. Humphry joined his brother, and went in at peace with all the world.

It was a warm day and the church windows and doors were left open. From the churchyard the intoning of the curate, and the responses of Farinder could be clearly heard, and from within the church the sounds of the wind in the yew-trees and of low-

ing cattle were clearly audible in the pauses of worship; the farmers might even distinguish the familiar voices of their own cows. There was peace within and peace without. The congregation knew that they need fear nothing disturbing in Mr. Middleton's sermon. He never startled his flock, as priests of coarser mould, by calling them sinners; he was far too well-bred a gentleman to do so; the service provided for that, — they were permitted to call themselves miserable sinners in the Litany: they were doing so, it was enough.

Humphry enjoyed being in church when he had the energy to get there. His corner of the pew which belonged to the Priory was a good place both for meditation and observation. It was in the south transept, and thus gave him an outlook on the body of the church and the faces of the people; and when the north door was left open, as now, he got a pleasant peep of the churchyard and of distant hillside and wood beyond. At all times he loved to hear the droning of the organ, to see the familiar faces of the village folk; or watch, as the sunlight shifted, the varied colours from one of the stained-glass windows follow each other across the recumbent figure of a marble knight on a tomb in the chancel, the inscription on which related that therein slept Sir Wynkin Wrixon Blakeney between his two wives. Exceeding peace filled his soul this morning. He was meditating on his comedy. All his views were being justified. Dick was at his side, respectably clothed

and in his right mind, less restless apparently than he had been for years. From what he had said to Tom Longfield, he appeared to regard the duel himself as a ridiculous affair, and had probably got over his infatuation for Miss Chillington. That young lady, he had heard, was almost immediately going to Canada with her father. He was sincerely glad of this, for he knew Dick well enough to be certain that his present calm was rather the outcome of a mood born of reaction after excitement, of renewed joy in life, than of his real nature. His nature was impetuous and restless, and if he saw or heard from Miss Chillington, he might instantly become rash. Since his return he had noticed that he and Margaret Longfield had been a good deal together, riding or walking, as in old days; and he believed that at last Dick's eyes were opened, and that he knew the best thing in the world for him would be the possession of this sweet girl's love. He glanced complacently at the altar steps, and in fancy saw them kneeling together, and beside them another couple — Tom and Nan, — village children waiting outside with bouquets, tears of joy in the eyes of Mr. Wrixon and Mrs. Longfield, himself ready with an avuncular blessing. It was all to be as he had prophesied. "Life is a good comedy," he reflected, "the love of a man for a woman may be great, but his love of life itself is greater. That is why life is comedy. It is tragic only to the man who does not understand the value of life nor see beyond the horizon

of an episode. We shall have them all happy and commonplace and satisfied with themselves and with each other, the inevitable end of a comedy. And yet at one time it almost broke down."

In the midst of his complacent musings, Humphry's eyes, which were absently resting on the patch of sunlighted churchyard visible through the open door, were suddenly attracted by a flash of bright colour. A second glance showed a gaily-dressed young lady who had seated herself on the square erection of stone which marked the tomb of the Longfields. The monument was a high one, and her legs were dangling; there was a mischievous smile on her face. Humphry recognised her; it was Connie. He grew very uncomfortable. It was she who had previously paid Dick a mysterious visit; her coming boded no good. She might in some way disturb the existing peace.

Connie was leaving England with Strong in a few days. She had come down to see Dick on a generous mission. She had telegraphed the day before asking him to meet her at the railway station. The telegram had been delivered on the cricket-field to young Middleton during Dick's innings, and had been pocketed by him and forgotten. Connie was annoyed that he had taken no notice of her message, and, hearing that he had gone to church, mischievously decided to meet him at a time when her presence might make him uncomfortable.

Blick, the sexton, from behind a yew-tree, was

also suspiciously watching the strange lady. He too recognised her; it was the bold woman who had come to the inn the night before, and had sung songs in the bar to the men, and who would have danced — and it was impossible to say what she might have done besides — if the landlady had not given her the alternative of going to bed or being turned out of the house.

At last the sexton could stand it no longer; he approached her bravely.

"Dus' knaw, young 'ooman," said he, "whose vault thee'st making free with?"

"How d'ye do?" remarked Connie.

"Well, it's Squire Longfield's."

"A pal of mine," replied Connie, "I'm just waiting till church is over to see some friends. This is a very nice seat, old boy. Now come up and sit down beside me and look pleasant."

Blick withdrew hastily and watched from a distance in a terrible frame of mind. He knew she was lying. The Squire's tomb had been desecrated; he himself had been tempted by a strange woman. He longed for the conclusion of the service and speech with a churchwarden. Here was a story for the inn.

Mr. Middleton's sermon was nearing its end. Connie had descended from her perch, and was walking up and down the path, still watched by Blick, when the Professor returned from his walk to join his friends. He saw Connie, and in an instant

recognised her. Trembling with fear, and hoping that he was unnoticed, he walked rapidly in another direction, not venturing to turn his head. Footsteps on the path behind him told him that he was pursued, and he quickened his pace until it was almost a run. But Connie had no intention of letting him escape. She caught him up with a merry laugh.

"Well," she said, "don't you remember me? You're not going to cut me?"

"Dear me! God bless my soul! most extraordinary," gasped the Professor, stopping. "A very beautiful morning; very agreeable weather."

"Yes, isn't it? And why aren't you in church? We're both of us naughty to be out here, but it's pleasanter. Now, let's sit down on this flat stone by the wall in the sunshine, and have a nice little talk till they come out."

The Professor saw the church before him with its open door as a sanctuary; he was meditating entering, but agitation deprived him for the moment of the use of his legs, and he sat down helplessly beside Connie.

"Well," she said, "if this isn't funny! To think of meeting you. And I haven't seen you since that evening at Mr. Tristram's. I hope you liked my lady friend's picture in the Grosvenor that you promised to go and see?"

"Really," said Mr. Wintersea, rapidly, "I am afraid I did not see it. Some very particular engagements, a press of work, in fact, made it necessary for

me to deny myself the pleasure." He forgot the treatment he had received from Connie in his shame at having been guilty of the discourtesy of overlooking a promise made to ladies.

"You must have thought us a funny lot that night," she said, assuming great seriousness. "I've no liking for such evenings myself, and I often wished since as I could meet you and have a bit of sensible talk; there's so few men one can talk to seriously. Now you mightn't think it, but I'm very fond of mathematics and that."

"Really!" exclaimed the Professor, more at ease. "Ah, now I remember, you made a very profound remark at the time in connection with a woman's nature and the symbol $\pi$."

"Oh, that was nothing," answered Connie, "my little studies must seem very poor to a man with a mind like yours. I expect you're always thinking about deep things. Now, when I met you just now I'm certain you were working something out."

"By Jove!" cried the Professor, with a pleased laugh, "you are quite right. You have really a very extraordinary power of observation. I have indeed been engaged on a little problem, a formula —" He hesitated.

"Oh, do tell me what it was?" she asked.

The Professor remembered its nature, and blushed. "I fear," he stammered, "it would hardly be one fit for a young lady."

"Oh," said Connie, reassuringly, and with real

interest, "do tell me. You need have no hesitation, I am a married woman."

"It is — it is hardly worked out," he said; "it is difficult to explain." He looked wildly at the sky. "A most seasonable day, is it not? I enjoyed my walk in the fields greatly, — the meadows and the milch cows, the verdure and the little flowers scattered about over the country."

Notes from the organ proclaimed the end of the service; there was a clatter of hobnailed boots on the pavement, a rustle of dresses, then talking and laughing outside the porch. Connie jumped up and forgot the Professor, who stole quietly out of the churchyard and set off homewards rapidly. Every one looked at her curiously; some of the village people who had seen her at the inn the night before recognised her and grinned; she and Lady Denham stared at each other with almost equal rudeness; the doctor made a note of her beauty, Margaret Longfield's maid of her dress. But Connie was quite at ease under the scrutiny, indeed her face indicated that she was enjoying it. Margaret Longfield and a little brother passed. The contrast between the two girls was striking. Perhaps on a stage, with accessories of paint and footlights, Connie might have looked more beautiful than Margaret; but here in the sunshine her beauty looked mean in comparison. To turn from Connie to Margaret might give the same impression as one receives who comes out of a theatre during the performance on a summer even-

ing, and, after the dazzle of artificial light and the glitter of stage scenery, sees a sunset over the hills beyond the spires of a city.

Margaret gave her a glance and passed on. Dick and Humphry followed. Humphry was keenly watchful. Dick, when he saw her, started and changed colour. He hesitated and stopped, hardly knowing what he did. Connie herself seemed at a loss for a moment, but she turned to Humphry.

"Good morning, Mr. Wrixon; you have not forgotten me?"

"Ah no," replied Humphry, "I remember. I hope you are well."

She turned to Dick. "Did you get my telegram, Mr. Malory?"

"No. What telegram?" he asked.

"Oh, didn't you? how curious! Well, I must see you; it's important. Good-bye," she said to Humphry. "The Professor and me have been having such a pleasant chat."

"I'll follow you directly, Humphry," said Dick, fearful of a scene. Connie might do anything outrageous. She might publicly claim him as her husband. He led her across the churchyard to a gate which opened on a quiet path through the fields. He knew the eyes of half Farinder had been on him, and his discomfort was extreme.

"Don't be angry, Dick," she said. "I never can help being cheeky. I have something important to tell you — about some one you care for."

"Who?" he asked, impatiently.

"I'll tell you presently. But first I've something to tell you about myself. We're leaving England next week — me and Bob." She enjoyed his surprise. "Yes, to Blockville, New South Wales, that's far enough off to please you, perhaps." She related with embellishments some of her recent history. His satisfaction made him unstinting in appreciative comment, and to her own amusement she found herself playing the part of the noble woman, anxious to repair wrongs which she had done in the past to two men whom she loved. She had indeed come with generous intent to tell him that his future would be unburdened by her, and to speak of Miss Chillington; but she delayed allusion to her interview with Elsinora, wishing to keep his attention on herself. At the moment, she desired of all things to appear attractive to Dick. In spite of her real affection for Strong she would not have given him a thought if she had seen a chance of playing the charmer successfully with Dick.

"Let's sit down here," she said, "and rest."

They were in a half-reaped cornfield, and Connie made herself comfortable among a pile of sheaves. She took off her hat; her hair had grown longer, and little black curls clustered over her neck.

"Sitting in a field together," she said, lying back luxuriously; "this is like old times when we were on the tramp and you took care of me. I thought you'd fallen in love with me at the circus and you didn't, but I was in love with you. I cried half the

night after you went, — and now, — sit down beside me. Dick, say you care about me still."

"Of course, I do, Connie."

"And — I'm your wife and here I am." She gave him a look to kindle youthful blood, and Dick was not of those men whose souls are as patent safety matchboxes; but the memory of the tramp to Riplow which she had recalled had given him a picture of Elsinora. Connie saw that his thoughts were not for her, and that it was too late to attempt to play the charmer with him. She returned somewhat reluctantly to her former part.

"I've done a deal of mischief in my life," she said, "but I suppose I'm going to be respectable now. I shouldn't wonder if you was to hear I'd started teaching in a Sunday school at Blockville."

Dick laughed.

"But you were always good to me, and I mean to try and make it up to you a bit. Now I'm coming to something likely to fetch you. I've seen the Irish princess."

"Miss Chillington!" Dick exclaimed.

"Yes. I've told her everything."

Dick became another man when she spoke of their meeting.

"You're breaking her heart," said Connie. "I know all about her being engaged. Strong told me that first. And you haven't been near her since you came home, have you? I say you're breaking her heart."

She still lay comfortably resting among the sheaves. Dick walked restlessly to and fro.

"Connie," he said, "what on earth do you mean? you're talking riddles or humbugging or something."

Connie had never found it easy to speak plain truth; she invented with unusual freedom now in relating her interview with Miss Chillington.

"If you care about her," she continued, "if you think her worth going for, she's to be had. She don't stick at the respectable, but she thinks that's what you're doing. She thinks you're afraid to go to her because you can't ask her to be married in a church, and she's riled, I tell you, and as you don't think it's good enough she's going to stick to the other man and marry him next month, I believe, unless you go in time. And it'll break her heart and spoil her life. But you seem happy enough. You —"

"For God's sake," interrupted Dick, "tell me, are you speaking the truth? Did she say that to you?"

"If you impugn my veracity," said Connie, getting up and assuming an air of dignity, "I've no more to say. Perhaps you'll show me the way to the station."

"Don't be ridiculous, Connie. Come along; we'll walk along this path. Go on telling me what was said."

Connie held up her hand. "Did you ever see that ring before? that may convince you. She and me were like two sisters; she gave me that off her own

finger for a wedding present after I chucked away your wedding ring. I told her all my own troubles and sins and that made her confidential to me, and she was upset and said a lot she might have wished to keep close; and from what she said I know as sure's you're standing there you've only got to go to her and say, 'Come,' and she'll go with you to the other end of the world, and snap her fingers at everybody."

Dick said nothing; he was much disturbed.

"And you can easy enough find out if you've any doubt," she continued. "You're a pretty faint heart to win a fair lady. I say, Dick, I'm getting hungry; what are you going to do with me?"

"Perhaps we'd better go to the inn," he replied, absently.

"You don't seem very grateful to me, I must say; I thought you'd have said 'thank you' anyhow."

"Oh, I'm really awfully grateful to you, Connie; you're a brick. I always thought you were, really. Come along; we'll go to the inn and have lunch together; it won't be the first time."

"No," said Connie, "I'm not coming. I know it would be awkward for you. You must get a trap and pick me up and drive me to the station. There's a train some time in the afternoon. I want to part real good friends. And now, before we get out of these quiet fields, just you give me a nice kiss to show you've forgiven me, and it's all right."

The party at the Priory that evening was a dull

one. The Professor was unusually nervous; Clovis Shovel, who was also on a visit, had absented himself all day, and returned in a state of unaccountable depression; Dick was silent, and Humphry was uneasy: there was a mystery about the visits which Connie had paid to Dick which displeased and bewildered him. Everything had been going smoothly until she had appeared, and then Dick had immediately shown signs of his old restlessness. She appeared on the scenes at inopportune times: she was in some unknown way connected with his fortunes. His comedy was in danger again, and this was the Marplot.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE AND A LECTURE ON LOVE.

NEXT morning Margaret Longfield awoke before sunrise, and ran to the open window with anxious eyes for the promise of the day. It was to be a day of days to her; for yesterday, while she and Dick were together in the churchyard, they had planned an expedition — a long tramp across the moor, to be begun in the early cool of the morning, so as to give time for pleasant mid-day loitering and leisurely homecoming in the evening. As she leaned out of the window for a view all round, dewdrops were shaken into her hair from the clustering rose branches. She found friendly assurance of what she desired from the sky; a thin mist lay on the moor; in the south, over the valley, a star still hung; and the yew-tree on the hill, which was to be their meeting-place, stood out black against the silver east. Here there was promise of the merry-footed morning, of a day that would run through racing shadows into mellow noon-deeps, and drop from golden noon too crimson sunset, and then pass into the treasury of her heart for ever.

It was long before the hour fixed for meeting, but Margaret was dressed and away before the sun had risen. The wind was stirring in the woods. Up sprang a lark, singing where the star had shone, catching from his height a first peep of the sunshine, and dropping the golden tidings to her. Then suddenly the woodland flashed green, the streams on the moorside blue; through the mist the distant channel was a bar of gold, and the black yew-tree sombre green against a rosy cloud in the east.

A morning befitting a happy tryst, right setting for the scene pictured by Humphry near the end of his comedy; and indeed if the slumbering author could now have had sight of his heroine, and had known for whom she was bound, his dreams would not have been of marplots and mischances. But of this scene his notes make no record.

With the freshness of the morning in her face, the joy of it in her soul, Margaret walked through the fields. She loved the earth so much that there was no single thing in it which she could have borne to part with. She asked for nothing more than she knew — no brighter flowers, no kinder hearts. She had no lofty ideals, longed for no stirring scenes of life. Her nature required but to fulfil itself — like the summer day, to pass from the cool and dewy morning into the warmth of calm noon. Such summer days as this ask only for their fulfilment that the west wind of the morning, the first love of the sunshine, shall hold fair into the noon; and she too

asked only for the blossoming of her womanhood that the first love of her girlhood should go with her. Her love for Dick had grown with her growth; it had, unknown to her, become part of every change in her life. Often she had feared, often hoped. Now he seemed nearer than at any time since their childhood. He made her his constant companion, and though his affection had little of the ardour of a lover, might it not be all the surer in the end for this? she asked herself. Love which had made part of itself all simple and sweet gifts of earth, which had won the music of the woodland and the spirit of the wild flowers, and had treasured up the sunshine of forgotten mornings — this and more was for him when he should seek it.

The rosy east grew gold, and the gray west soft with coral clouds. The wind was a child laughing in the woods, racing in the meadows, tossing and playing pranks with the mist-wreaths on the moor. The birds sang the golden reveille. The dewdrops imprisoned the sungold in the very heart of the woodland. And Margaret was a part of the radiance — the morning found utterance in her. For a girl is close to nature. Strip a man of his comforts, rob him of his clothes, and set him in the woods, and behold! he is a savage, no subject for an artist's brush. Do the like for a girl, and we shall see her a nymph, an oread, in harmony with the scene, and a joy for our artist.

Margaret climbed the hill with many a backward

glance, for though she was before her time he too might be early. A drove of startled moorland ponies raced in merry circles round her; a hedgehog rolled himself to a ball at her feet; the talk of the Priory rooks in the distance grew louder; blue smoke rose over the village; the ring of an anvil told that the day's work had begun. She reached the yew-tree, and climbed to a hiding-place among its branches, a favourite perch of her childhood, and waited for Dick. Her thoughts turned to the mysterious girl who had come to see him on the previous day. She wondered whether he would tell her about this girl, who must be connected in some way with his past life, perhaps with its unhappy side, with days to be regretted. But she was untroubled; Dick might have been foolish, but she trusted him; if only he loved her she asked no explanation. Jealousy she had felt, but not now. The only sting of it which had troubled her sweet nature had come of his visits to Ireland and the mention she had heard of Miss Chillington; but now he never spoke of Ireland, and she had almost forgotten what she had suffered from past apprehension. And this day was to be her own. As she waited she pictured it throughout — first, merry meeting; then brisk tramping in the cool morning to the village at the edge of the moor where they were to breakfast; then there was so much to talk of on their wayfaring, such promise of pleasant pictures for them as they went, such comradeship, such laughter in store. And she would be near him

— nearer than ever to-day, her heart told her; for the fancy was with her, though she dared not admit it to herself, that before the end of this expedition he would claim the love she was so ready to give.

The sun rose higher; the sky was a deeper blue, and the clouds, held high on the west wind, were now all white. The time for their meeting had passed, and Dick had not come. "Lazy boy," she laughed to herself, "you never could get up in the morning; but when you come I shall be hidden here, and make you wait awhile before I come down." But the minutes passed to the half-hour, and a shade of vexation crossed her face as she left her hiding-place, and walked slowly back in the direction of the Priory.

Some one was coming to meet her, but it was not Dick; for Dick had forgotten his engagement and was now driving to Wayland to catch the first train of the day which should take him on his way to Ireland.

Clovis Shovel had spent a restless night, and had formed a valiant resolution. As long as he had thought that Dick might have been Margaret's lover he had bravely put her out of his thoughts; but some words which he had spoken about her a few days previously had assured him that she was no more to him than a dear friend. During the last week he had been consumed with jealousy, and of no other person than innocent, unconscious Professor Wintersea. The Professor and Margaret had indeed become excellent friends; her friendliness had captivated

him, and he had found himself at ease with her. Clovis had watched them together with tortures, and a jesting remark which Tom Longfield had made to him a couple of days before had confirmed his suspicions and fired him to action. "Humphry's been recommending the Professor to get married," said he, "and I believe he's hit. Look at him and Margaret! I never saw the old bird so jolly. I believe he's going to cut all you young fellows out." Probably nothing else in the world could have made Clovis venture to approach her himself as a suitor; his modesty would have prevented such a possibility; but when he compared himself with the Professor he appeared at least equally eligible. He could have done grievous bodily injury to that peaceful man: for the first time in his life he knew the emotion of hatred; and courage came of it. From his window this morning he had seen Margaret crossing the fields. He determined to steal a march on his rival and, come what might, try his chances before she had sacrificed herself. So it happened that she met Clovis instead of Dick.

Her first view of an approaching figure in the distance made her heart leap; but when she saw to whom it belonged, her disappointment grew for a minute to irritation. Clovis approached awkwardly.

"Good morning, Miss Longfield," he said; "what a glorious morning!"

"Yes," she answered, trying to be friendly. "So you are an early riser too?"

"Not as a rule, Miss Longfield. I fear I am usually a heavy sleeper in the morning, but I intend to break myself of the habit, really." The rings of sleeplessness encircled his eyes; his cheeks were sallow; he looked as much out of place in the setting of early light as Margaret looked in harmony with it.

"Do you wish to be alone, or may I walk back with you?" he asked, nervously.

"Oh! I shall be delighted," replied Margaret; but "How shall I get rid of this little bore?" was what she thought.

"Do you sketch at all, Miss Longfield?" he asked.

"Oh dear, no! I should only spoil paper and get into a temper at my own stupidity."

"I am sure you wouldn't. I mean you wouldn't be stupid about it, and I know you are fond of art."

She gave him a glance. She had hardly looked at him before. She was wondering how Dick could ever have chosen this man to be his friend; but as he was Dick's friend he must be hers.

"Yes," she said, thinking of art in connection with Dick, not him, "it is a splendid profession — next best to the army."

"I am so glad to hear you say that," cried Clovis, flattered. "It is indeed a glorious service. Mere scholarship seems so barrren in comparison, — mathematics, for instance."

"Yes, mathematics are dreadful. I never could learn as much as a proposition in Euclid."

"Of course not," said Clovis, with relief and delight; "it would be a terrible thing to live with a mathematician, one who would try to reduce housekeeping to a formula."

"And yet I have known mathematicians, charming men, who could appreciate beautiful things."

"Not truly, Miss Longfield. Indeed they cannot." He was apprehensive again. "No mathematician could be ever inspired by a woman, like an artist. I — I — I did not tell you that I am about to be elected as an associate of the Academy."

"I am so glad to hear of your success, Mr. Shovel. I suppose Dick was delighted with your good news?"

"Dick? Yes. I haven't told him yet. You are the first I have told, — I looked forward to telling you first."

Margaret could hardly help smiling. Was it possible that this could be another lover? she thought.

"I wished to tell you — " he stammered, and stopped. "I wonder when Dick will be back?"

"Where from?" she asked quickly.

"Oh, I don't know," said Clovis. "I saw him as I came out; he was just setting off for the station in the dog-cart. Dear Miss Longfield — "

"To the station, did you say?"

"Yes. He said he had important business, and hardly knew when he should return."

Margaret's face flushed. "You are quite sure?" she asked.

"Oh yes, perfectly. I saw him, you know. Dear

Miss Longfield — " But Margaret had turned her back on him and was walking towards the ponies, who had paused in their scampering, and were now close by eyeing them inquisitively. She held out her hand in friendly fashion and approached, followed by Clovis. One of the ponies stood and let her come up to him, and suffered her to throw an arm over his neck and stroke his head.

"Miss Longfield," Clovis pleaded, while she still kept her back turned to him, "I am — I can't tell you what I feel. I feel my utter unworthiness; but no one could love and worship you more, and — dear Miss Longfield — " He continued to stutter and gasp out his declaration.

Margaret could stand it no longer. This was the end of her expedition, her day of days; the anti-climax made her inclined to laugh hysterically. She did not make the slightest response; it was as though she had not heard. "See," she said suddenly, with an unwonted flash of anger in her eyes, "see how well I can ride bareback!" And without looking at Clovis again, she took hold of a knot of the pony's shaggy mane and sprang on his back. In an instant the pony was away across the level stretch of ground, galloping for the rest of the drove. For a few hundred yards Margaret kept her precarious seat cleverly, then seeing some uneven ground ahead, slipped off and took a path to the left which led through the woods towards home.

Clovis stood in speechless dismay. Then he

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blinked, heaved a profound sigh, and struggled with a choking at the throat. "She couldn't have heard what I said, or couldn't have taken it in," he thought; "it was impossible that she could have heard; and perhaps it is as well — yes, it is perhaps as well."

After standing motionless until she was out of sight he walked slowly towards the Priory, pondering in his heart. If Margaret had loved the Professor, he reasoned, she could not have spoken with disrespect of Euclid; and now that his jealousy was gone, he appeared to himself as a ridiculous suitor. He was ashamed; he marvelled to think of his presumption, and clung to the hope that his declaration had been misunderstood. He remembered bitterly the fashion of his countenance and the timidity of his heart, and he knew that he was an impossible lover for such a girl. What did it help him that he could understand and love the beautiful if his features were grotesque; what that he had wells of love to give if no one had need of them, or drew but a casual pitcher-full now and then? But it consoled him to remember that his love for Margaret was his own, beyond reach of robber; his life should be true to her; she would inspire his art. So it was well with him. The energy of love, which for him might not express, expand, diffuse, and recreate itself in loving, would, without doubt, take other forms of activity and lift his work heavenward; and therein he would find happiness.

Humphry was walking on a sunny path in front of the Priory, waiting for the sound of the breakfast bell, when Clovis appeared. Humphry was not in his most agreeable mood. Dick's departure, which he connected with Connie's visit, had annoyed him, and reawakened some apprehension for the success of his comedy; but it would have been difficult to detect any outward tokens of his displeasure; it never found expression in ordinary channels. He now met Clovis with a smile.

"You have been walking early, Mr. Shovel. You look extremely well this morning. I hope you have enjoyed yourself."

"Oh yes, extremely," answered Clovis, nervously. "It is indeed a beautiful morning; the birds have been singing very sweetly."

"Very. You sing yourself, do you not, Mr. Shovel? We have enjoyed your playing, but you have not yet sung to us."

"No indeed," said Clovis, earnestly, "I do not sing at all. My poor father, it is true, used to sing —he was a very successful singer of comic songs. But I have none of his talent."

"It has found expression in another form, sir." Humphry chuckled inwardly; this information had suddenly given him the secret of the humour of the son's countenance. "By the way, do you happen to know where Dick has gone?"

"No indeed," replied Clovis.

"Mr. Shovel!" said Humphry, solemnly, "you

are a young man with talent, and therefore likely to be attractive to the other sex. Let me as a friend give you a word of warning: do not suffer yourself to be entangled with women." Clovis blushed crimson; he fancied Humphry must have some suspicion of his love for Margaret.

"Indeed, I have no hope — no intention," he stammered.

"They lay snares for you, sir, when you least suspect them." Clovis felt that he was being lectured, but Humphry was thinking of Dick, and seeking solace in expressing his views.

"And be very careful, Mr. Shovel, about falling in love. Above all do not idealise women. The ideal of woman is the blossom of the tree, the realisation is its fruit. The lovely wild apple-blossom turns to a fruit which sets the teeth on edge; the fruit of the may-flower is a husk. Let your expectation be humble, and you will be pleasantly rewarded. Nature again gives us an illustration. Your trivial vine-blossom turns to the cluster which yields you wine; the poor flower of the vegetable-marrow is converted to a noble companion for the autumnal joint. The only part we can play properly in life is comedy. The vegetable-marrow is a comedian; it has no desire to be heroic; there is no striving for romance in its flower, but look at the fruit! and think of the dignity it achieves in the third act. Your crab-tree, on the other hand, is a worthless actor which essays the romantic and ends in anticlimax."

"But some women, sir," said Clovis more boldly, and thinking of Margaret, "excel any ideal we can form — they are angels."

"Angels! yes, one in a thousand; and then you have to wrestle with her like Jacob, and the chances are that you will be thrown."

"Indeed, I have no intention of marrying, sir," said Clovis.

"You are wise; for if you idealise the wrong woman, you have disappointment, and if the right one, disappointment also, for she will probably be out of reach."

Clovis sighed. "He need not marry, but the ideal is his own," he said.

"Certainly, let him keep his ideal if he likes. The blossom belongs to him who loves it best; the fruit is his who happens to own the garden." Talking had relieved Humphry, and the sound of the breakfast bell almost restored his equanimity.

"I have been much interested in your views," he said. "Come, let us go to breakfast. I have just received some very choice Norwegian anchovies in juniper, and I have instructed Mrs. Collop in the serving of lax, which is to accompany them, and which I think you will find to your taste. A rasher of Westphalian bacon will follow."

Professor Wintersea joined them as they entered. "Mr. Shovel has just been giving me his views about women and love, Professor," said Humphry. "I am reminded by them of an opinion I once heard ex-

pressed by a peasant lad in Wales — the sharpest boy I ever met; he was about fourteen years of age, but a philosopher. Amongst other things he said that it was not his intention to marry. 'Not marry?' we asked him, 'pray why?' 'No,' he replied, 'women are painful things.'"

"A very just remark," said the Professor.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### OBSERVATIONS AT THE CROSS-ROADS.

DICK had chosen to live and resign Elsinora rather than sacrifice his life in making an effort to save her. His passion had slept, needing but a touch to arouse it, and Connie's words had brought the awakening. But it had not been to die that he had come to Ireland, — not to fulfil his obligation to O'Connor, but to defy it: to rescue Elsinora, not by honourable death, but by dishonourable evasion. It was one of those crises in passion when the man, though a strong man, accepts the woman's view of the situation. From Connie's words Dick believed that Elsinora was ready to break through all barriers and promises; he could fancy her saying —

> 'I could not love thee, dear, so well,
> Loved I not honour — '

not "*more*" but "*less*"; she would come to him in spite of everything; and this being so, neither considerations of duty nor thought of consequences, nor fear of God or man should check him. But he did not know Elsinora's view of the situation, nor had he read to the depths of her nature when he formed this conclusion; his honour was in her keeping.

It was an exciting enterprise with a doubtful issue. He knew that, failing to fulfil his bond to O'Connor, he ran the risk of being shot by orders of the secret society; and the reflection that he came to Ballyvonaire openly, and thus stood in danger of death still, was the only offering he could make to his conscience.

He had sent a telegram to say that he was coming. The dilapidated Angel of the Post Office of Kenmare, mounted on horseback, who presented it to Elsinora, had shone in her sight as a messenger from heaven. She was too excited to await Dick's coming, and walked to meet him along the road by which he would have to drive. But he, too, was walking, and, having made a short cut by a mountain path, it happened that they missed each other. When he passed the settlement at the cross-roads, near Ballyvonaire, he became an object of interest to the knot of idlers at the forge and the women leaning over the half doors of cabins.

"Ah, ho," said one, "'tis the Englishman; I remimber his faytures."

"'Tis the same," said another.

"Mrs. Kaylagher!"

"Yes, Paddy Blake."

"Did ye hear any fresh news o' the O'Connor and herself?"

"'Deed then, no."

"Whisper! Didn't she be after walking to the top o' Glen Connor to meet the Englishman?"

"Why then, indeed, for what else, Paddy?"

"And what's the maning of it, I ax you, Mrs. Kaylagher, if it isn't that there's something betune her and him?"

"Oh, but 'tis you have the divil's own head for raysoning things."

"And behind the O'Connor's back!"

"Ah, Pat, shure she's very free," said Mrs. Kaylagher; "she have the good word for every one, God bless her, and she may have a friend here and a friend there, and small blame to her honour. But 'tisn't for the likes of us to be sayin' a word agin her; and laste of all, 'tisn't for you to say it," she continued, warming, "for who but yourself gave your shouldher to Ma'nan Begley, a dacent girrl, when her father was turned out of his bit of land, and went coortin' the housemaid at the great house. You're a disgrace and a schamer, and you're nothin' else."

Pat sought more sympathetic company amongst the men outside the forge. He was so pleased with his theory that the O'Connor had a rival that he propounded it here again. Two men who had just arrived exchanged glances: they were members of O'Connor's society, and had been present on the night of the duel.

These two men shortly afterwards departed in different ways; one of them in the direction of O'Connor's house, the other along the road by which Elsinora had been seen to walk; and the latter took especial pains to escape observation.

At the end of the pass of Glen Connor Elsinora was resting. She had pictured this as the spot where she would meet Dick. Presently she would see him in the distance; and then! To-day, she pleaded with herself, she need not remember the barriers between them; to-day she might be weak, since to-morrow she must be strong; to-day for meeting and the joy of it, to-morrow for parting and its pain. She found some relief from restless thoughts in talking to her little Scotch terrier, who was also taking a rest on the rock at her side.

"Oh, Larry," she said, "my pretty little Larry, that thou didst know how many fathom deep I am in love. But my affection hath no soundings, like the Bay of Portugal. That is in Shakespeare, Larry, or something like it."

Larry allowed his tail to flap the rock thrice; he was too polite to show less attention, too indifferent to show more.

"And, Larry, there is some one coming to meet us soon, and I wonder if we look warm; and your mistress was very wrong to put on her prettiest frock; she ought to have found an ugly one; she ought not to try and make herself look well, because then, you see, he'll be fonder of her, and she ought to want him to care less for her, and then he could go away without minding so much. But she wants him to admire her and love her more and more, and yet she's going to send him away, Larry; and she is very foolish and vain, and she wishes she were dead."

And Larry's tail wagged only once; he was getting bored.

A sound attracted her attention. She looked up, and saw a man stealthily appearing through the rocks.

"Oh!" said Elsinora, "is that you, Tom Shehan? I thought you were cutting your oats. What brings you all the way up here?"

The man looked round to make sure there was no one in sight, and approached nearer.

"Phaix, then, your honour, I was just wondthering that same meself whin I came round the corner," he said in a low voice. "Whin I set out I knew right well what it was, and now 'tis gone. 'Maybe,' says I to meself, ''tis the little donkey that's sthrayed on me, and maybe 'tis the lint of the loan of a scythe I do be wantin' from Mr. Henessy, and maybe 'tis to meet some one I've come,' says I."

Elsinora laughed.

"Maybe your honour came with the same intent," he added, mysteriously.

She looked up quickly.

"You were always the good friend to me and mine, Miss," said the man.

"Is there anything wrong, anything I can do for you?" she asked, anxiously.

"Whisht!" he held up his hand and listened.

"'Tis as much as me life's worth to be seen spakin' to your honour to-day," he explained. She was beginning to feel alarmed.

"The Englishman's gone down before you," he whispered, "and he'll be a dead man in forty-eight hours."

Elsinora started. "Shehan," she cried, "tell me — what do you mean. Can you mean that they will — try to murder him."

"Not murther, thin, at all, but honest work, and 'twill be no more than his rights."

There was a gleam of hostility in his eyes. But for Elsinora he would have been well pleased that O'Connor's enemy should meet the death which he had earned; but the look of trouble and appeal in the face of the lady he loved touched him.

"Right or wrong, I'd help him if 'twas in me power," he said, "but it's beyond me, and there's no more to say, good or bad. I'm sworn. But ax him yourself. Ax him if he remimbers the last day he was here — that's a twelvemonth this day week. Send him away out of Ireland before Tuesday night, or he'll be a dead man. And good luck to you, Miss, for, faith, you were always the good lady to me and mine." Before she could find words he was out of sight among the rocks. Her courage did not desert her, though she was pale, and her hand trembled. She stood for a moment irresolute; then she struck into the mountain path, and went homeward at a pace which astonished the thoughtful Larry.

After a year of separation the lovers had to endure the discomfort of meeting in the presence of others. Elsinora found Dick with Father Daly and her sister

Caroline on the lawn. They did their parts creditably, hardly venturing to look at each other. Even when Caroline had taken Father Daly to the other end of the garden, and they were alone for awhile, one touch of Elsinora's hand was his only welcome; they knew that their hour of greeting had not come, and longed for the darkness. But in that brief space Elsinora told him of his danger, and implored him to leave at once; and her questioning won from him the story of the duel. She was trying to grasp the meaning of that tragic absurdity when Caroline and Father Daly returned. Caroline had a ready explanation for her sister's agitation, and looked with a kindly, critical eye at Dick. She noticed some change in him; his face was bronzed, and he had the air of a man who has seen service. "He ought to have been a soldier," she thought; "he is not a bit like a sculptor;" but she approved him, and was quite ready to accept him as a brother-in-law. Father Daly said good-bye to him with expressions of great cordiality. "Come and dine with me, sir," he said; "come on Tuesday; there's mate" — this with a sly twinkle; for, as Caroline afterwards explained, his reverence kept an excellent table.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE PINE WOODS.

DICK and Elsinora went out into the windy night. The air was full of lonely sound, — of the rising sea, and of the pine-trees, and of distant mountain waters. She slipped her hand into his, and let her cheek touch his shoulder for a moment. The dark pine woods were round them; their hour of greeting had come.

He drew her close to him; her arms were round his neck; her kiss wedded his. Tears rushed to her eyes; great joy and great sorrow overpowered her. For love of her she believed he had come to meet death; he had shown that he loved her better than he loved life; heaven touched her earth; never was love like his.

But Dick had no thought of ideal love; his heart beat madly; her nearness thrilled him. Life, which a week ago had seemed good for its own sake, was now, without her, worthless. He must possess her utterly. She, this one girl of girls, must be his — his wife. For this he could die; but to win the boon without paying the penalty was his aim.

"I am afraid, Dick," she said; "let us go in; you may be watched."

"Dearest, don't fear anything," he tried to reassure her; "I am safe enough to-night at least. There is a week left."

"I will go to Mr. O'Connor; he will be generous; and you must leave early in the morning."

"No, no," he said; "you must not go to him. And you must forget that wretched farce of a duel. Let us forget everything except each other now."

Farce or not, it was evident to Dick that she regarded the issues as tragic, and that it had not occurred to her that there could be any evasion of his obligation. Her view of the situation insensibly affected his, but at present he could make no outlook; he could think of nothing but her.

She led him down through the pine wood by a path which only one who knew it well could have found in the darkness. Dick spread his overcoat for her on the dry fir spines which covered the mossy grass, and sat at her side. The only light came to them from below through the tree trunks, — a reflection of starry sky in the waters of a little mere, through which the river ran. The sound of the sea was lost; nothing but the sounds of the woods could be heard: the yearning of the wind's voice in the pines, the softer whisper of the larches, the silver hush of the birch-trees, the sudden rustle of the reeds in the water. The voices of the woods touched the same chord in both hearts; they spoke, where words were powerless, of infinite yearning, of divine regret, of unfulfilled love.

"Sweetheart," he said, "I have been picturing you to myself for nearly a year, every day and every night, and now this is *you*. I tried to get killed because I loved you so much, and once or twice I nearly was killed; and then, when I thought I should never see you again, I used to feel your hand in mine, as it is now. And then afterwards for a little while I fancied I could live without you. But I had to come, and I cannot leave you any more."

"So you love me well enough to die for me," she said, "my own brave boy; what other girl had ever such a lover!" She drew closer to him, and wound her arm in his. "But you must not die. If you go away there will be no dishonour in living. I will see him. But we must never see each other again, never, till we die."

"I will not have life without you," said Dick, excitedly. "I cannot even endure to think of what it would be, month after month, year after year, alone, without one touch of the dear hand. And you — you, my own girl, you could not bear it either if you love me as I think you do."

They were silent for awhile. Elsinora was trying to look bravely along that dark vista of lonely road which his words had opened. The wind in the pines again had voices for both of them, of the infinite pathos and grand regrets of life.

Some natures find truest expression in hours of calm, and are untrue to themselves under emotion; others hardly reveal themselves in the peace of daily

life, but awake in the atmosphere of storm. Of these were both Dick and Elsinora. It was now that the innermost soul of each was expressed, and the woman was nobler than the man.

"Elsinora," said he, "if there had been no barrier between us but Connie — that marriage which was no marriage, — would you have come to me? Could you, though the world would not have called you my wife, — could you have faced it?"

"Yes," she answered, firmly. "I should have been proud to come to you. Could you doubt it? Could you doubt that I love you better than the opinion of the world?"

"And cannot you face the world and come with me now?" he cried, impulsively. "Elsinora, for God's sake don't let us be beaten by an idea. This is real; this life is a thing we know. I love *you*, the girl I see now. I love you, whom I can feel close to my heart. We know nothing of any future life — it may be or not, — but we have this. Are you going through the rest of your life without love, without me? Let me break my word! Let me be dishonourable! What are all these words, these words of man's making, compared with life and love? To throw away life and love is a greater wrong. We are sinning against nature, we are sacrificing a real thing for a shadow. Come with me, Elsinora; come and forget it all. Dearest, you will come!"

She clasped his hand closer, but did not answer.

"You are coming," he whispered.

Elsinora shook her head.

"Oh, you will — you must."

"No, Dick, I cannot," she said.

"You can't! you don't love me enough to face it!"

She threw herself into his arms, and cried bitterly.

"Oh, Dick! unkind, unkind, not love you enough? You did not mean it. But even to say it!"

He felt himself lowered in her sight — her hero no longer. He saw clearly enough the difference which she saw between scorn for conventional opinion and violation of a pledge of honour.

"It would not be facing the world bravely," she said; "it would be hiding away. Every promise broken, every obligation. We should be ashamed; our love would be no longer what it is."

"I was wrong to ask you," said Dick. "My love for you and these intolerable fetters make me mad. Forget that I said it." His sole thought now was of standing uninjured in her estimation; her love was everything to him.

"But I shall not leave you, dear," he said. "I shall go through with it."

Her breath came quickly. "Dick! —"

She stopped, hearing her name. It was her sister's voice. "Elsinora!" — clear and sweet and distant it came to them, and an echo of it from hills beyond the pine woods, "Elsinora!"

## CHAPTER X.

### ELSINORA AND O'CONNOR.

On the afternoon of the following day Elsinora was on her way to O'Connor's house. In the failing light he was sitting alone in his room; he looked worn and ill, and was evidently restless and excited. He would start suddenly, and listen as though he heard footsteps or voices in the lonely house; and from time to time he rose and went to the window. It was a dreary outlook: the fir plantation black under darkening skies; the reedy lough, where the wild-duck were settling for the night, reflecting a gleam of melancholy gray, and beyond the brown moorland and the lonely mountains. Within the room it was still drearier: pale lamplight fell on the bare walls; there was no sound in the house but O'Connor's tread as he walked to and fro.

He had never recovered from the effects of his accident, and the failure of his work and his loss of Elsinora had injured his mental as well as his bodily health. The news of Malory's arrival had changed his condition of despondency to one of extreme excitement. This was the enemy who had ruined his hopes, who had forfeited his life to him, and who

now had come to Ireland on the eve of the expiration of the term allowed, either to carry out his obligation or to shirk it, he could not tell which. The sole remaining satisfaction which life had to offer him was revenge; and if his enemy intended to be dishonourable, if he came as Miss Chillington's lover and did not mean to pay the penalty, it was good to remember that certain death awaited him. His movements were being watched, and every minute O'Connor expected one of his followers to come to him with news. After a while his excitement abated, and his despondent mood returned. He took some old letters from a drawer, and commenced reading them by the lamplight. Once he pressed his hand against his forehead, as though trying to remember something, and there was a look of fear in his eyes. Then he looked up, and again listened as for footsteps. This time he was not mistaken; Elsinora herself was at the door.

Dick had expressed his intention of remaining with her, of facing all the consequences and meeting death, — how or where he did not concern himself. He had spoken impetuously, without consideration, eager only to reinstate himself in her good opinion. But though she rejoiced in her heart at his decision, she determined that his life must be saved, and that she would see O'Connor. Nothing but overpowering love could have sent her on such a mission: to ask from the man to whom she had broken a double promise, who had generously freed her, a boon for

the man whom he knew to be his rival. She was nervous, she felt humiliated; and it was only the remembrance that she came against Dick's wish, and that he had sworn to go through with his part honourably, that helped to sustain her pride. Her face did not reveal her agitation; her climb up the hill had brought the colour to her cheeks, and the girl who stood before O'Connor was not pale, but radiant. He rose and gave her a chair with a trembling hand.

"I am afraid — I hope you are not ill," she said to him, noting with trouble his changed appearance.

"I am far from well," he answered. "I suppose I never quite got over that accident."

She hardly knew what to say. She recognised her own handwriting in the letter on the table at his side. She felt her task to be supremely difficult.

"I am going away, Miss Chillington," he said, "going to leave the old place altogether. I have worked hard, God knows, for the cause of our country, and it has all come to nothing. I am broken. My life is over."

She had no word of hope to offer him about the cause which they had once been mutually zealous to support, and of which she had lately thought so little; and she felt that it was less the failure of his work than his loss of her which had overwhelmed him.

"How I worked for it!" he continued, almost as if speaking to himself, "and this is the end."

"Life is full of disappointment and sorrow, Mr.

O'Connor," she said, with an effort, "but no brave, good work is lost, though we may not see the result of it ourselves. I, too, am very unhappy, and I, too, am going to leave Ireland for a long, long time."

He grew suddenly alert, and looked up with quick jealousy. "With whom?" he asked.

"With my father. I am going to Canada."

O'Connor remained silent.

"I did you a great wrong, Mr. O'Connor," said Elsinora, timidly, "and you were generous — more than generous. I want before we part — I want you to be generous to me once more, — to my friend, Mr. Malory."

O'Connor sprang to his feet.

"Has he told you, then?" he asked, excitedly — "told you all that took place between him and me?"

"Yes, I asked him questions. I found it out."

"I always thought he was a treacherous rascal, like all the rest of his countrymen," cried O'Connor. "By God he does not deserve to live, — the man who has ruined me, who has stolen your love from me, whose life I spared on condition he kept out of the country and away from you. I trusted him, though, as a gentleman, and this is the result. And he has not even the manliness to come to me himself to beg for his life — he sends a woman to do it for him. Miss Chillington, can you have any respect for such a man?"

"He does not know I have come, and he does not wish to neglect his bond," said Elsinora, proudly.

"He means to go through with it?"

"This is why I have come — because I believed you yourself would not wish it, that you would be generous. He will keep your conditions still. I will send him away at once — to-night."

"If you think his life worth preserving he can keep it. Let him live and enjoy himself," said O'Connor, scornfully. Then his tone changed. "I am glad you came; I am glad to be able to show you that my love for you is true."

Her cheeks flushed, and tears filled her eyes.

"What were we saying?" cried O'Connor, suddenly, with a look of fear in his eyes; "to-night, the seventh of September. Oh, I remember. My head gets a little queer sometimes. I suppose you want to marry him; he wants my blessing. What was it we were saying? You are going to send him away to-night. Yes, his life is his own. But — you will not marry him?"

"If you think my promise worth anything, Mr. O'Connor," she said, with emotion, "I promise you that I will never see him again after this evening, unless — unless he refuses to accept your generosity. I cannot say; he does not know I have come."

"Oh," replied O'Connor, "I don't think he is very likely to refuse. And you say you will send him away at once. I believe you. It is you who are generous now. You are sparing me the torture of fancying him with you as your lover. God knows how I love you, and this from you is something to remember, better than revenge."

Elsinora could say no more; she gave him her hand and went.

O'Connor walked up and down the room in agitation; then he sat down again and listened to the ticking of the clock on the chimney-piece. A curious gleam was in his eyes; a delusion which had once or twice lately taken possession of him recurred now.

"Ah," he thought, "it is better to have won her love and to have to die for it than to have lived and lost her."

He looked at the clock with excitement. "Six o'clock," he said aloud; "six hours? no, six days and six hours left; and I could be free to live if I chose to ask pardon and promise the Englishman I would give her up. But I'm damned if I will. I'll die like a man. Six days — no, six days and six hours left." A few moments afterwards he rose, trembling violently. "What the devil's the matter with me?" he cried. "Good God, I thought for the moment that it was I who had lost and had to die. Where's Ring?"

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE PROGRESS OF HUMPHRY'S COMEDY.

ONCE more the question was put to Dick, whether his love of life or his love of Elsinora were greater? A year ago when it had arisen he had proved his faith to her in action, — he had sought death and failed to find it. Afterwards, with the glow of new-born life about him and the girl who inspired his passion remote, the other answer had been given, as Humphry had predicted. The love of life comes with the steady pulse, when the passions are up it is forgotten; and expediency was as powerless to stay Dick now as would be the words of philosophy to check a charge of cavalry in mid career. None the more on that account does the soldier desire death; and though Elsinora was dearer to Dick than life, life was dear. All the forces of his nature were concentrated in a passion to possess her. Resign her he would not, no matter what the cost; but to possess her and life also was his aim. And what of broken promises and honourable obligations? He put the disturbing question aside. Love, he argued, justified everything; it was great enough to make its own laws; the happiness of his life and hers should not be

sacrificed for the sake of observing fine points of honour. He allowed himself the excuse that he was a sinful man, not a hero of romance, and he would win his girl and live his life too, if it were possible.

And herein was marked the difference between Dick's love and Elsinora's. He could dissociate it from honour, she could not. Her love was fast bound with all that she held noble and truest in life: a wound to truth was a wound to love.

The picture of O'Connor, broken in health and heart, haunted her on her way home. She saw herself as the cause of his ruin. The memory of her own unfaith, of Dick's readiness to break his word of honour, his endeavour to induce her to go with him, troubled her. Her nature was loyal and true: she was weary of broken trust. There must, she determined, be no more weakness or failure, else love itself would fail. She resolved that Dick should go at once. Even the sweetness of one more evening together must be sacrificed. She would be firm, even though he thought her cold. She believed that he would not fail, that he would understand and trust her, that their love would endure in spite of life-long separation, and that in the end it would be well.

She heard on her return that he was in the library and went at once to him. Some beautiful golden-brown locks were disarranged about her brow. He touched them lovingly. The task of sending him away was terribly hard, the joy of the thought of what life would have been for them if they had been free filled her.

"Dick," she said, "I have seen Mr. O'Connor; he was generous; he does not wish you to die. You are quite free, but you must go at once. I have promised."

"I don't want his generosity," said Dick, angrily, "unless — unless he made it complete," he added, in a different tone; "unless you come with me."

She looked pained; he noticed a tone of coldness in her voice.

"Dick, you do not know what you are saying. I am weary of all this unfaithfulness. He has been honourable and generous. There is only one way left for us. You must go at once — this evening."

"You can bear to live without me?"

"I must, I must, Dick."

"You can let me go through a miserable lonely life for the sake of keeping faith to a wretched artificial bond. Even if it were a sin to break it, do you not love me enough to be sinful for my sake?"

"No," she said firmly, "I love you too much to let you be dishonourable. If I went with you I should despise myself, and I should not love you as I do now. Oh, my dearest, don't think I am saying hard things, — my heart is breaking for love of you, — but you must be true. We shall love each other for ever. Our love will endure through all absence. I shall be yours as truly as if I were at your side."

Elsinora's nature had always asked for, and responded to, the heroic. She had dreamed of a heroic lover, and Dick had been such in her eyes. His

reckless daring in the Soudan, his readiness to sacrifice his life in coming to Ireland in the hope of freeing her from O'Connor, had won the fullest measure of her admiration, and with it the deepest depth of her love. So entirely was her heart given to him that no failure on his part could have uprooted her love; but it could wound it, chill it. To her hero she was a lover, passionate, ready to give herself utterly; to the man who failed she was a woman, loving and sorrowing, whose fires were unkindled. Dick had seen this on the previous night; he saw it again now. His passion for her overcame every other consideration; her honour, her steadfastness only increased it; her warmest love must be his, and, as he could not obtain it otherwise, he would not hesitate to give his life.

A hungry man has sold his birthright for a mess of pottage; a lover his life for a kiss. Often in such cases reflection might have caused regret for the bargain; perhaps in some there is an intention of, if possible, taking the boon and avoiding the payment. Now, life seemed of no value to Dick, and the thought of death had no sting. The end was victory, not defeat. He would go to meet death through the very gates of love. Perhaps when the hour of payment came he, too, would hesitate; who should say? But now he was her lover. His eyes kindled with a resolve; he drew her closer and whispered to her.

"You are right," he said. "Your truth and hon-

our make me a man, but I cannot leave you. Last night you said that my farce of a marriage would have been no barrier, and if it had not been for my bond to O'Connor you would have come to me in spite of it."

"Oh yes," she answered.

"Then you must come, dear, now, and I will be true to my bond."

She drew a quick breath.

"There is a week — six days — left before the year is up. You must come with me, you must be my own girl utterly. Life is nothing to me without you — you are everything to me. When the time comes I can die all right. But you must be my wife."

Her face flushed crimson; she did not speak, but hid her face on his shoulder.

"Dearest, you cannot refuse me. I claim you. If you do not come, I swear I will go through with it all the same. I have been born on this earth to win you for my wife, and I will. Look at me, darling — answer me."

"Oh, Dick, I am bewildered, I am afraid."

"We will go to-night, dearest. We will take the cutter and sail away to-night. And I will bring you back, I promise you, before the time. But till then, sweetheart, I will keep you. There shall be no failure; I shall not flinch in the end."

She was carried away by his fervour; her eyes were bright with excitement, her hand trembled in his. She was frightened, but she was lifted

heavenward. Hers was the brave vision which can distinguish between true honour and the world's conventional view of it. She had refused to allow Dick to disgrace himself by cowardly evasion of his obligation. To take her and not pay the debt was dishonourable; to go with him, though she might not be called his wife, was no dishonour. The mischance of his marriage with Connie placed no barrier of conscience, no law of God, between them. The only interposing barrier was the law of society, more fearful than the law of God to the respectably timid, — to her nothing. Connie had gone through the form of marriage with him — but that had not made her his wife; she herself could not go through the form, but she would be none the less his true wife for the want of it. And if he fulfilled his bond and paid the penalty of death all would be atoned, all unfaith cancelled. But still she sought to deter him.

"Oh, I would come," she said, — "you know I would come — but I cannot let you die. If you go to-night without me, you may live and still be honourable."

"If you come with me, I can die and be honourable."

"I cannot let you die. My dear, dear boy, don't force me."

"If you do not come," he exclaimed, "I swear to God I will not live without you."

He had made up his mind to possess her, and she saw it was useless to try further to dissuade him,

and she was glad. She flung her arms round his neck and kissed him.

"I am yours," she said; "I will come with you."

Half an hour later she was speeding across the fields towards Father Daly's house. It showed her as pure woman, not free from lovable weakness, that while she was ready to brave the world and cared not for its view of her reputation, she desired at this time the blessing of her priest.

Father Daly had gone across from his house to the chapel, and thither she followed him. He was in the vestry, and hailed her with delight, but he saw in a moment that she was disturbed and excited.

"Dear Father Daly," she said, "I am going to be married. I am going away to-night. I want your blessing before I go."

"And who's the lucky man, my dear child?" he asked in astonishment.

"Mr. Malory," she answered. "I cannot tell you any more now. I will tell you everything, everything when we — when I come back. Oh, dear Father Daly, but if only we could have been married by you; but as we cannot, I want your blessing before I go."

He knew that Malory was a Protestant, and supposed that to please him she intended to go through the Church of England marriage ceremony, and was troubled at the prospect. He, too, was distressed, but he made no protest. He knew her resolute nature; he loved her dearly; her word was a law to him.

She took the old man's hand and led him from the vestry into the chapel. The candles were lighted on the altar, and Elsinora knelt down on the altar step.

"Here," she whispered, — "I want you to bless me here, and say the same blessing that you would say if you were marrying me."

Soft light from the candles fell upon the old priest's gray head and the girl's beautiful face. There was no other light in the little chapel. Father Daly put one hand on her head, and his eyes filled with tears as he repeated the blessing.

"*May the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob be with you, and Himself fulfil His blessing upon you; that you may see your children's children unto the third and fourth generation; and may afterwards have everlasting life, without end, by the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth, God. World without end. Amen.*

"*Benedicat vos omnipotens Deus, Pater et Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus. Amen.*"

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE BEGINNING OF A WEDDING JOURNEY.

THAT evening at dinner Caroline Chillington watched the lovers with great interest and some diversion. If their eyes met Dick immediately became preoccupied and lost the thread of the conversation, and in Elsinora's manner there was something unusual; her colour came and went quickly when she spoke; she seemed almost shy. But Caroline thought she had never seen her look so beautiful, and she perceived that she had chosen this evening one of her prettiest dresses. "What a head, and what a neck," she thought, "for our sculptor to dream about!" Something had been said of Dick's departure, and this perhaps explained appearances. Caroline was a thoughtful sister, and determined that these two should have the evening together undisturbed. She was amused: love had brought her queenly sister down from the heights, and had made her shy like other girls. For the first time in her life Caroline felt like an elder sister.

After dinner Dick rowed across the inlet to the cutter to make sure that everything was in order on board, and Elsinora went to her room to put together

some things for the journey. She could not face the ordeal of saying good-bye to Caroline. She wrote a note to her telling her that she was going with Dick, that they were going to be married, that his life was in danger and he could not remain at Ballyvonaire, and that she would be at home again in a week.

My own (she wrote), do not be angry with me for not coming to you; it was no want of trust in you. I knew you would have helped me, but I could not bear it. When I come back I will tell you everything. I shall need your love more than ever. Do not let mother be anxious. Think of me. Pray for me and him. Good-bye, my own sister.

She took the note to Caroline's bedroom and placed it on her pillow. Greeting of one of her favourite Irish airs, which her sister was singing, came to her from the distance. Her eyes filled; she longed to run to Caroline and throw herself into her arms and tell her everything, but she could not face it. Caroline was devoted to her and a brave comrade, but would she understand? She would tell her when she returned. Or perhaps not even then. She would be truly Dick's wife. No one would know that she had not been through the form of marriage with him. Connie had sworn to be secret. Why, then, should she distress her dear ones needlessly? She thrust from her the thought of that home-coming. A convent was now the only future resting-place which she pictured.

She wrapped herself in the cloak with the red hood which she had worn on the night when she had

danced with old Thady, and went down to the quay to wait for Dick.

The night was warm with the soft touch of the south-west. The young moon was aloft. A slow pilgrimage of silver-hooded clouds was crossing the sky from the verge of the ocean to the unknown world beyond the eastern mountains. The pine woods slept, black and silent, and the dark waters of the inlet were traversed by wandering fields of light.

The sound of dipping oars grew nearer, and Dick, pulling vigorous strokes, brought the boat alongside the quay.

"Now, darling," he whispered as he came to her side, "everything's ready. I will get your traps and be back in a minute."

He was in high spirits; no thought of impending death troubled him now; the excitement and joy of the present completely possessed him. She, too, felt something of the same; she showed no hesitation, uttered no timid word, as she put her hand in his and stepped into the boat.

"So you are coming with me to be my own, my brave, sweet girl," he said. "Oh, but this is better than a thousand years of life without you!"

When they were half-way across the inlet he said suddenly, "Do you remember the last time? it was just here we listened to the echo." A longing came over him to hear it again. "It has haunted me ever since," he said. "Will you?"

The boat slipped into a space of silver waters, and

a stream of moonlight fell about Elsinora. She stood up in the boat and gave the old Bavarian cattle call, — a call to bring in the merry morning and sing the joy of the warm earth. Like golden sunshine was the voice that called, like pale moonlight the answering echo came back over the water from the Glen of the Seven Whispers.

And soon the sails of the cutter flashed white in the moonlight, and she was running out through the headlands. Beyond their shelter, the soft wind blowing in from the ocean filled her canvas and sped her merrily over a level sea.

"North or south?" cried Dick, with his hand on the tiller; "which shall it be?"

"South," she answered, and the boat swung round, and her bows dipped southward through the summer sea.

Dick brought up some cushions from the cabin for Elsinora, and after awhile he made fast the rudder and came to her side. The pilgrimage of clouds went on, trailing great shadows across the sea; the black headlands grew indistinct in the distance; the sound of the water meeting the shore faint and far. He put his arms round her and kissed her. "My beautiful girl!" he said. "My true-hearted, brave-hearted girl!" She smiled with pleasure; his glowing admiration was sweet to her. She thanked heaven for her beauty, since he found delight in it.

"How I love you!" she whispered; "I don't think you know how much."

She felt that love is greater than life, — is its very soul — the only meaning of creation, and she breathed her faith through him. The riddle of human existence seemed solved to him at last: in the soul of this girl he found life itself; all else was but its encircling home.

"Sweetheart," he said, "we were married to-day, and now we are off on our wedding journey. It is just the same as if we had been married like others. We will fancy we were. We said good-bye to them this morning. They were all there — my uncle and Nan, and Margaret, and Tom, and old Humphry, and the rest of them — to wish us luck. And now we are away together. We have everything before us. You are my own girl at last."

She blushed and put her arms round his neck and drew his head to her breast. The boat rose and fell gently; the ripple of water played along its sides.

"And all night long," he continued, "we shall sail away down the coast. No! By and by, before the moon sets, we will find a haven and drop anchor, and you will fall asleep and rest until morning in my arms."

She pressed his hand closer but did not speak.

"And we have days and days before us — better than years. We will go ashore by day; we will visit strange islands, and anchor every evening in quiet waters. Fancy exchanging this for a long life without you! Fancy not being proud of the chance of dying for a girl like you!"

A warm flush was in her cheeks; her hood had fallen back from her head, and the wind stirred the locks above her brow. She nestled closer to him, and gave him back sweet whispers for his fervent words. She, too, had now for the time forgotten the future penalty in the joy of the present. The romance and mystery of the scene enfolded them. A path of moonlight lay on the Atlantic to the far western horizon; the wash of silver seas was about the cutter; a point of light shone on a headland in the south — the world was far away.

"And Elsinora, darling," he said, "it is no dream. It is real. You are my wife."

Her arms were close round him; the warmest love of a human-hearted girl, the purest passion of a heaven-born soul, were for him in her kiss.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### TRAGEDY OR ANTICLIMAX.

Six days later, towards evening, the cutter flew in through the headlands on a gale of wind, and dropped her anchor in smooth water under the Island of Clogheen.

With the coming of the night the storm increased in violence. Its full force drove from the Atlantic into the bays and estuaries of the south-west. At times the moonlight broke through the flight of clouds and flashed white on the great masses of spray hurled back from the headlands. Seaward and landward the night was full of sound: on the shore the thunder of breakers, the onrushing sweep of wind through the woods, its boom and rebuff and distant moan in the mountain valleys. The inlet was almost calm, but a constantly increasing swell rolled in, and long storm-driven undulations ran and echoed and welled along the wall of the quay in front of Ballyvonaire Castle.

The time of parting had come. The gale was increasing every minute, and above its roar came the sound of a gun at sea from a vessel in distress. But the lovers took no heed. It was no storm of the

earth which surrounded them; it was "an elfin storm from fairyland," far away, heard as in a dream. The earth was for them not a battlefield but a trysting-place, and the voice of the winds and waters sounded not as a dirge but as a bridal song.

As it grew later the direction of the wind shifted a few points; its force was beginning to be felt in the inlet, and the previously smooth water was broken as Dick rowed Elsinora back to the shore. Her courage did not fail until after he had left her. Though she was very pale and trembled all over as he held her in his arms, she did not try to dissuade him from going. The temptation to do so was almost overpowering, but she conquered it. His honour, their love, should not fail in the end through weakness of hers. How he left her he could not tell; words at parting there were none. Once when he was rowing back to the cutter he fancied he heard his name called by the beloved voice, and he was not mistaken. It was too late, and the wind drowned her words. She was unnerved. The desire to save his life at last overcame everything else; she called again and again, but no answer came across the windy water. Then she determined that she would go to him, that if he would not save his life she must die with him. Weak and giddy, she ran down towards the quay steps, where another boat was fastened, intending to follow him. But before she had reached the boat her strength failed, and she fell to the ground with faintness. Half an hour later,

when Caroline, who had seen the cutter before nightfall, and had been out a dozen times during the evening with anxious eyes, went down to the quay for a last look-out, she found Elsinora still lying unconscious.

Dick set off to face death like a man. At first he acted almost mechanically. The atmosphere of Elsinora's love was about him, and he felt the exaltation of one who has fought and won: all life, his past, which he had hated for its failure, was transfigured and ennobled by the end: he had won, and through the girl for whom he was proud to die.

But gradually a change came over him. He began to feel the excitement of working the boat in the storm; he understood a sailing boat thoroughly; he and Tom Longfield when boys had often faced the channel in half a gale of wind. While he was still sheltered from the force of the storm by the headland on the southern side of the inlet he double-reefed his sails; he acted as a man who was going into danger and sought to overcome it, rather than as one who was seeking death.

The storm that night was memorable on the Irish coast. The whole force of the gale blew in from the Atlantic, up Bantry Bay, and the Kenmare River mouth, and raged still more fiercely to the south round the Fastnet Light, and up past Long Island into Roaring Water Bay. It struck the cutter as she passed the headland. Dick sailed her into it as close to the wind as she would run. She was at home; she had been built for stormy seas, and had never

before met the full force of the storms whose child she was. She was like a soul born for the heroic which at last finds its scope. Dick caught her spirit; his heart rejoiced as she rose to the great waves.

He took a backward glance. He saw the black loom of the mountains, and Ballyvonaire Castle white in a burst of moonlight. Then he looked onward again, over the raging waters, out to sea. Whither was he going? how long would it last? Was he truly seeking death? He caught sight of the cushions on deck; he was at Elsinora's side again; the sound of the storm was far away, the cutter gently dipping in the swell. No! that was all over. She was won, and he was going to his death. This was no dream.

He was full of life and strength, ready to face any foe, undertake any enterprise — not to deliberately seek death. He shivered at the thought of it. "God, for something to face and overcome, or fail in," he thought. He could have gladly met danger ten times greater with an object beyond it, — if only Elsinora were on the distant ship, for instance, and he were facing the forlorn hope of saving her; but to have to deliberately allow the storm to triumph, to loosen the reefs and let the boat capsize when he might have ridden the storm out, was a different thing.

And he might still run the cutter back; he could get ashore; he could go away to a distant land.

Neither Elsinora nor any one else would know that he had not been drowned that night. He wavered; he was on the point of putting the boat about; the sound of another signal gun from the distressed ship braced him; he let her drive on.

A long, dark headland shot out to the north-west. It was from beyond this point that the sound of the gun came. Dick altered the course of the cutter; the wind was blowing flat on her beam; she was running gunwale under. The cutter's size was in her favour to-night; she rose like a sea-bird over the great seas, in which a larger ship could not have lived. The moon was now obscured by masses of cloud, and the coast lights could only be seen dimly. Beyond the point there was no sign of the distressed ship. Dick made one or two tacks, but failed to sight her, not that there was the slightest chance of his being able to get alongside or take any one off if he had found her, but she was a goal: he could try, and then let the end come.

But after he had failed in his search the temptation to save his own life came over him again. He felt powerless to deliberately capsize the boat. His battle with the storm had altered the whole tendency of his mood. While Elsinora was near, impelled by her influence he had been ready to die a hundred deaths. Now he was a man, alone, fighting against death.

So he let the cutter run on up the coast. It began to be clear to him that she would live through the

gale unless he prevented it. No weather worse than that already encountered was probable. He even began to anticipate the future: the cutter might run on all night, and in the morning he would land at some sheltered place, and, well, then he must disappear for ever. The thought of the chance of Elsinora ever hearing that he had not died brought back his mood of indecision. Even death, horrible as it now looked, was less horrible than the chance of being abased in her eyes. But how could she know? It was not fear — he had shown times enough in the last year that he was brave — which overcame him; it was the intense clinging to life of a young man who had no immediate physical stimulus to face death.

He knew that he was going to make an attempt to save himself, and he scorned himself. He had taken upon himself to play tragedy, and he was about to achieve anticlimax.

He was wet through with spray. Every nerve in his body was braced by the excitement of the fight he had been making with the storm. He felt a glow of admiration for the cutter, almost akin to that which one gives to a living person. After the gallant fight she had made, to allow her designedly to be wrecked would be like shooting the horse which had carried you triumphantly through the fire of the enemy. This was in his mind; but he was honest enough not to seek about for justification of the course he was taking: he faced the fact that he was

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE END OF A COMEDY.

WITH a broken arm, a bruised body, and a touch of rheumatic fever Dick passed an intolerable week. He was as bruised and wretched of soul as of body; he scorned himself immeasurably; he wished he had died. The life which he had gained looked poverty-stricken; he could not contemplate the future. Every one would imagine him to be dead; the only object before him was to get away to some remote place of banishment as soon as his strength permitted.

He was treated with great kindness at the inn. The cutter had gone down in deep water beyond the rock on which she struck. He was supposed by the people who picked him up to have been a passenger on the ship which had fired the distress guns and was afterwards wrecked, and he was content that they should so think.

One morning about ten days after his parting with Elsinora he went out to sit in the sun on the bench in front of the inn. He was gloomily revolving some plans while he smoked an unattractive pipe, when he was aroused by hearing the name of O'Con-

nor. Two men were talking in the room of the inn; through the open window he could hear what they were saying, and he listened.

"There's no luck for us at all," said one speaker; "'tis just one misfortune afther the next. He was the man for us — one o' the ould stock with good blue blood; them's the men we want, not your pew-kopiles of linen dthrapers. Oh wisha, where'll we find the like of him?"

"Where indeed? It throubles me soul to think of it. There's no shance for us or the counthry."

"He was a good man, God rest him."

"He was that, divil a finer."

"And his head wint quare, the Lord preserve us."

"His heart was just broke with working, and all for nothing, out in America — that's the long and the short of it, Tom."

"'Twas Joe Garvey toult ye the whole histhry of it?"

"Old Joe himself; there was no one in the house but Joe and a slip of a gerrl to help in the kitchen. All day long, says Joe, he was as sinsible as meself till after the Captain wint away to Cork in the afthernoon, and a little gossoon brought in the news about the young lady being down with the fever. Then, says old Joe, he got quare, and wint to his room, and began thramping up and down; and he wouldn't take his supper, nor lave any one come anear him, but just wint thramping up and down. Joe wint first to the door, and then to the window;

and then he watched him, poor man, through the crack in the inside door."

"Ah, sure, 'tis you have the old story of it."

"Indeed I have. Old Joe Garvey thrimbled like a lafe when he toult me. Well, afther it was dark, he kep' on walking about, and then he'd look at his watch, and 'Two hours now,' say he, and thin later on, 'One hour left,' says he, and then he got out his revolver and took a look at it, and then he sat down."

"The Lord preserve us, and keep us from harrm."

"There was no one in the house but Joe, and Joe was thransfixed to the ground with fear, and thin the O'Connor he says, 'Time's up,' says he, and he took a letther out of his pocket and kissed it. 'Time's up,' says he, 'God save Ireland,' and with that he took up the revolver and shot himself there and thin."

Dick had listened breathless. He staggered to his feet; he had not recovered his strength; he felt faint, and was obliged to sit down again.

"All the boys in the counthry was at the funerial —a grand sight; and 'tis I'd have been there meself too, if 'tweren't for havin' to keep out o' the way afther the little account I settled with Emergency Brian."

"Phaix, he deserved what you gave him. And the young lady? I never had the luck to see her meself, but I hear there isn't the likes of her between this and the city of Dublin. Tell me, will she get betther?"

"Plase God she will, though I heard tell the doc-

thor was doubting himself about it. But 'tis over a week now since I had the news."

"Well, well, whatever happens 'tis the will o' God."

Dick pulled himself together. He found his landlord, and arranged about his departure and the immediate procuring of a horse and car to carry him. He had no money; he had told the landlord so at the beginning, but he had been none the less kindly entertained on that account; his host, though a poor man, treated it as a matter of no importance.

Dick instructed his driver to go in the direction of Ballyvonaire. The distance was twenty-four miles, and the driver thought they might arrive at three o'clock. He was a pleasant and communicative person, but he soon gave up his attempts to talk to his irresponsive companion. "Twenty-four miles," he murmured to himself, "'tis just twenty-four miles when a man's alone, and 'tis twelve miles when he's wid a gerrl. But, be the powers, 'tis forty-eight whin he's wid a dummy."

Dick, weather-worn and unkempt, sat on the opposite side of the car with compressed lips. Elsinora was lying between life and death, he had heard, and he could not dwell for long on anything but this. But his mind was crowded with troubled thoughts. O'Connor was dead; that brought him no relief, rather it deepened his sense of shame. O'Connor had been true while he had been false; his reason had broken down, and he had believed himself the loser, and his sense of honour had risen strong

through his mental derangement, and he had carried out on himself the sentence which should have been his own. Whatever his faults, O'Connor had been true to himself, and to his country, and to his lady. He thought of his own folks at home, and of the suffering they would have to undergo at the news of his death. If only Elsinora had been common clay — a woman who would have rejoiced in his preservation, no matter what the cost — and that he could have returned to her without fear, how much happier it would have been for all. And yet even now, if he could have had her such instead of the woman he knew her to be, he would not have rejoiced in the exchange.

He suffered intensely as he thought of her lying ill. The shock of her parting from him, the tragedy of O'Connor's death, must have been a strain terrible to bear. He longed to see her for one minute before he went, he longed to comfort her, but he was banished. He must go away, an exile for years or for ever. He must serve her by making the rest of his life such as she would approve. And she, his own, his beloved girl, his brave sweetheart, his wife, — she was now between life and death, perhaps, and he dared not go to her. He had found his punishment.

He said good-bye to his driver at the little village near the entrance to the Ballyvonaire inlet. He took the path by the shore, and walked on without knowing whither or why. September was radiant again. It was an afternoon full of bright colours and clear distances. The inlet looked to him as it had looked

on that afternoon, a year before, when he had rowed to the island with Elsinora. His thoughts reverted to that afternoon. Of all the beautiful pictures he had treasured of Elsinora, his recollection of her as she looked then was most delightful. He recalled her appearance as she was rowing — her white dress, the beauty of her figure, the overflowing fun in her eyes; and afterwards, when he had troubled her, and she was leaning against the little font in the chapel. And then he recalled her as he had seen her last, in the moonlight on the deck of the cutter, and that picture made him tremble — it was more than merely beautiful.

He came to a turn of the shore which brought to view Ballyvonaire Castle and the quay. A strange scene was before him. On the opposite side of the inlet the water was crowded with boats of all descriptions. The distance was too great for clear sight of what was taking place; but presently he noticed a movement amongst the boats, and they started in an irregular procession across the inlet.

Not far from the shore where Dick stood lay the Island of Clogheen, and towards it the boats were being rowed. A feeling of awe came over him as he watched the silent procession approaching. As it drew closer he perceived that it was a funeral. He remembered that within the walls of the chapel on the island there was a little burial-ground, and Elsinora had once described to him a scene such as this. His heart stood still.

In all the boats there was silence; the only sound was the dip of the oars and the ripple of the water. The calm and beauty of the autumn afternoon was on land and sea. The dark reflection of the mountain sides lay clear in the deep blue inlet. The island of many colours, ringed with seaweed, was bright in sunshine.

In the bows of the leading boat stood Father Daly, with bare head, holding aloft in the sunshine a silver crucifix; then came rowers rowing muffled oars, and behind was the coffin covered with a cloth of gold. Here was hidden the dear lady of the land.

In the next boat were Mr. Chillington, Doctor O'Keefe, and Tristram. Gentlemen of the neighbourhood followed in their own boats. Then came the people connected with Ballyvonaire, tenant farmers, servants, and labourers; and after them, as many of the peasantry of the district as could procure any sort of craft to carry them. Some of the boats were almost dangerously crowded with ragged creatures who loved their lady; and there was one boat which had no occupant except the old man who rowed it; this was O'Connor's.

The grave was made in the grass-grown enclosure of the ruined chapel. The procession came slowly onward, dark and silent, making a gloom on the bright water; but radiant, as on a cloud in the west, the golden sunshine rested on the boat which carried Elsinora.

## CHAPTER XV.

### FAREWELL.

It was a fine morning in the early winter. The sun had won its way through the mist, and was warming the sheltered corner of the old Farinder garden. Humphry Wrixon was smoking his pipe and meditating on a letter which he had received that morning from Dick. Presently Tom Longfield and Nan came into the garden hand in hand. Humphry's face had been grave, but a pleasant smile filled his eyes as he watched them walking to and fro. Next month they were to be married. Tom's regiment was to be stationed at Plymouth, and they would therefore be within visiting distance. Nan's happiness was delightful to see, and Tom's complete subjection and devotion to the quiet little maiden was agreeable to Humphry; he remembered that young gentleman's lordly demeanour in the past.

"Yes, my dear," he observed to himself, "you have him thoroughly in hand, and so you'll keep him. You are a very clever little person in your way, and Tom is not a very clever person, and you both have good hearts, and you'll manage him all your life without letting him know it, and you'll

both be very happy. You will both play the game properly. You will take the world as it is and enjoy the present, and never have any stupid and unrealisable ideas, and never be disappointed; and you will have a fine family of wholesome boys and girls, and Tom will be very domestic, and in a few years he will forget that he ever thought he could be a great commander of armies; and he will avoid foreign service and please the old man by settling down at Farinder, and he will become the colonel of the yeomanry, and entertain them at lunch at the Manor-House on bank holidays; he will go regularly to church, he will be a staunch conservative, a judge of cattle, a J.P., and all that a woman should desire in a husband. You will act excellently; you are philosophers unconsciously, playing the only parts which our stage allows to be performed successfully. And the others —?"

His face grew grave again. Dick said little in his letter to indicate the view which he now took of the performance. It was written on board an Orient steamer, and posted at Port Said, but gave no particulars of his movements. He asked Humphry to open any letters which might come directed to him, and ended with words of greater affection than he was in the habit of expressing. Humphry laid the letter down sadly, and opened another, which was addressed to Dick. This was from Strong — a letter full of good tidings of his success in the new world. It contained the following *postscript* from Connie: —

Bob's too modest. He hasn't half told you what a big man he is in this place. We're toffs. They think more of ladies out here than they do at home. I was never made such a fuss of before. Bob says I'm improved in my looks since I was married. He's going to be mayor in a year or two, and his politics are changing. We don't hear much against rich people now. When I'm Mrs. Mayor I mean to entertain in style. I rather astonished some of them when we first came by my riding. It was at a picnic. I got on an untrained colt, a buck jumper, and put him through some tricks. There were a lot of young fellows there, and my aunt! weren't they pleased. But now we're getting too grand for larking, and in my present condition, which Bob has mentioned to you, riding ain't prudent. If you write to me I will write again. I have written to the Irish princess, who is the best lady in the world. I often think of you, and our journey when we ran away from the circus, and the dear old moke. I'd like to have a day like that with you again. But if ever you come as far as this we'll have some fun, and I'll entertain you at dinner to make up for your treating me that night when we went to the theatre. Remember me to the Professor, and tell your fat uncle I send him a kiss. I hope you are happy and prosperous. Really and truly I do. — Your affectionate

CONNIE.

"You impertinent little jade!" said Humphry aloud; "you vain abomination! A person like you deserves death; you have spoilt three lives, and you have been the marplot of a most excellent comedy."

A curious smile at his own expense was on his face. "And yet," he thought, after a minute's reflection, "*she* was not the Marplot after all: it was Love."

Presently Tom left Nan and strolled over to him.

"Hullo, Tom," said he, assuming a cheerful tone, "how is it you are not out to-day with the stag

hounds? I understood they met at Ladywood Cross."

"Thought I'd stay with Nan," said Tom; "she's a little upset about Dick. Anything more from him in your letter?"

"Some instructions about money. It's brief enough; he says he cannot return. Don't tell Nan that."

"Doesn't he say in your letter, either, where he's going?"

"Not a word."

"I expect he's going to join some men he met in Egypt on some exploring expedition they were talking of in Central Africa or Abyssinia," said Tom. "Or perhaps he's off to India, or China, or Australia, God knows. Poor old chap! what hard lines he has had. How long do you think it will take him to get over it? When shall we see him again, Humphry? A couple of years?"

"A couple of years! I don't believe he will come at all."

"What nonsense," exclaimed Tom, with some alarm in his tone; "he'll get over it all right in time — every one does. Upon my soul, I think things have not turned out so badly: the other day we were in fear and trembling for his life, and now that ruffian O'Connor is dead and — and Miss Chillington, too, unfortunately; but he is free to live, and such wounds always heal up."

"Well, Tom, there is no harm in hoping."

"I tell you," said Tom, "he'll come back; and how jolly it would be if he were to marry Margaret some day. You know, I believe she won't marry any one else; they were always awfully fond of each other. By Jove! how jolly it would be."

"Ah, yes, how jolly!" replied Humphry, "but I believe we have seen the last of Dick."

Tom returned to Nan feeling vexed with Humphry; but he soon forgot his dissatisfaction in the discussion of their own joyful plans for the future.

Humphry was disinclined to sit still that morning; he left his seat and his books, and decided on walking. He went through the garden down into the old courtyard. Voweraker, grown very feeble, was piling apples in the Tythe barn; no one else was about the place; it was deserted and lonely. He looked in as he passed the chapel. Mr. Wrixon was there contemplating the unfinished blocks at the intersections of the arch mouldings. In his workshop were the clay models for the uncarved heads; these were full of beauty, well worthy to be set beside the existing ones. He had worked on the idea suggested by Clovis Shovel, and had preserved the same face throughout, making it tell the story of a soul; in the last, where the face was that of an old man, the lines of trouble were lost, and the expression closely resembled that of the first and most youthful of the faces. Mr. Wrixon was almost satisfied with the result himself; but, even now, he hesitated to touch the virgin stone.

"Well, John," said Humphry, "going to make a beginning at last on the real thing?"

"No, Humphry," replied the old man, "I have been turning it over in my mind. If I do it at all it will not be yet. I should like Dick to see the last models before I touch the stone. I shall wait till Dick comes home. Yes, Humphry, I've made up my mind to wait till Dick comes."

Humphry crossed Nan's garden, which was sweet with winter violets. Beyond, at the edge of the shrubbery, where it opened on the fields, he paused and sat down on the stump of a tree, curiously contemplating a couple of weedgrown borders. A few rose bushes and some stalks of London pride were the only survivors from better days when Dick and Nan had made their first garden here; but they had more attraction for Humphry now than the bright flower-beds which had superseded them.

He felt very lonely this morning. Dick was gone, and Nan was going. This apparently cynical and comfort-loving man had more power to love, more desire to be loved, than others knew.

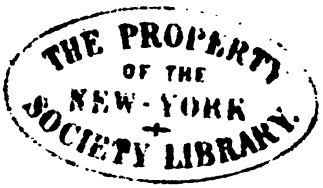
After a while he fell to moralising, as was his wont. "So Dick found the girl who was his ideal and lost her," he thought; "and if she had lived and married him, she might have ceased to be his ideal. And she! she found her ideal of love, and she is gone, and holds it safe for ever."

The sound of a huntsman's horn came across the fields. He looked up and saw the hillside gay with

the movement of riders and hounds. A few minutes more and they were away across country. When he next looked up he saw Margaret Longfield on horseback, riding slowly down the road towards the village. She had ridden part of the way to the meet with her father, but had felt no inclination to follow the hounds. Humphry understood the reason.

"It's all very sad," he said to himself, "and strange, and comical. This life of ours is very difficult to understand. It's all right, though, I suppose, if you don't take it seriously."

But the first tears which Humphry had shed since he was a boy filled his eyes now as he thought of the end of his comedy.

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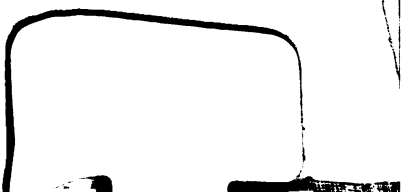
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